

Jews in Byzantium

Dialectics of Minority
and Majority Cultures

Edited by

Robert Bonfil

Oded Irshai

Guy G. Stroumsa

Rina Talgam

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Jews in Byzantium

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At the outset of this vast volume of studies we would like to take the opportunity and thank all those who have precipitated and assisted in the fruition of this massive project. First and foremost we extend our deepest thanks to *Scholion-Interdisciplinary Research Center in Judaic Studies* operating under the auspices of the Mandel Institute for Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University and especially its director Prof. Israel Yuval, who relentlessly accompanied and encouraged our project during our three year period of fellowship at the center and after. Alongside him we would like very much to extend our deepest thanks Mrs. Zohar Marcovich for her continuous care and assistance in the group's work, our thanks also go to the staff of the Center, especially Merav Kaddar, all of whom made our stay there a happy and memorable period. We would like to extend our thanks to all the scholars from abroad and from Israel who participated in our seminars and concluding conference as well as contributed to our volume and thus to the group's work and success. Above all we would like to thank Ms. Hannah Landes, our most committed, industrious, and in short excellent editor, whose relentless efforts have finally brought this project to its welcome completion.

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STYLE AS A CHRONOLOGICAL INDICATOR:
ON THE RELATIVE DATING OF THE GOLAN SYNAGOGUES

Roni Amir



Fig. 11: Friezes, ed-Dikkeh synagogue (currently at Kibbutz 'En Gev).

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH ART:
JEWISH ART AS A MINORITY CULTURE IN BYZANTIUM

Rina Talgam



Fig. 1: The Binding of Isaac at Beth Alpha (E. Sukenik, *The Ancient Synagogue of Beth Alpha* [Jerusalem, 1932], pl. XIX).

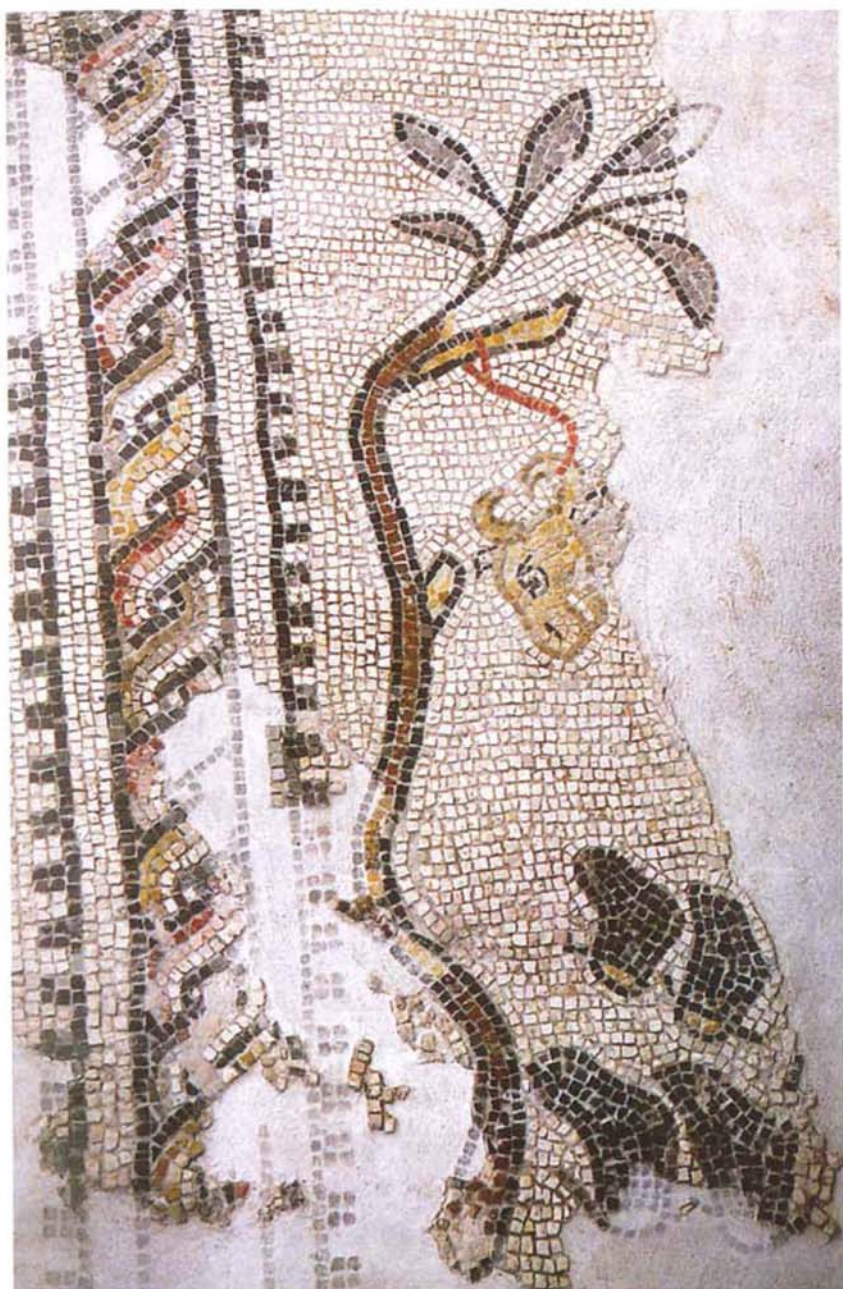


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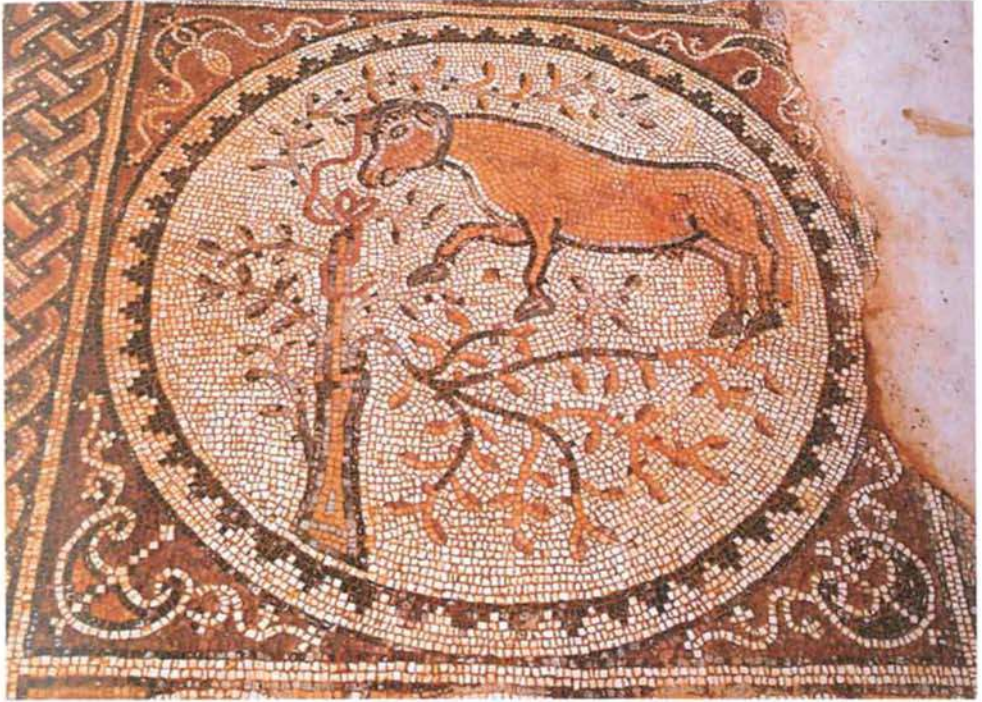


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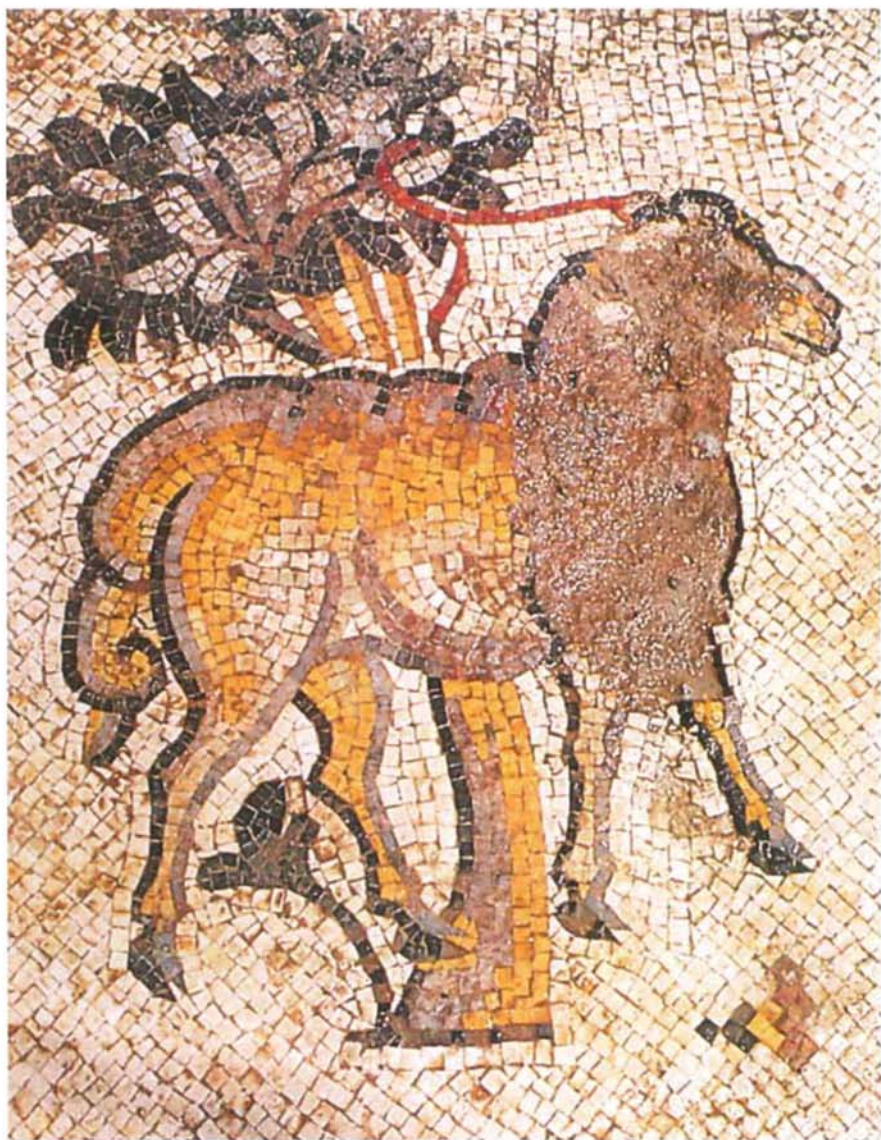


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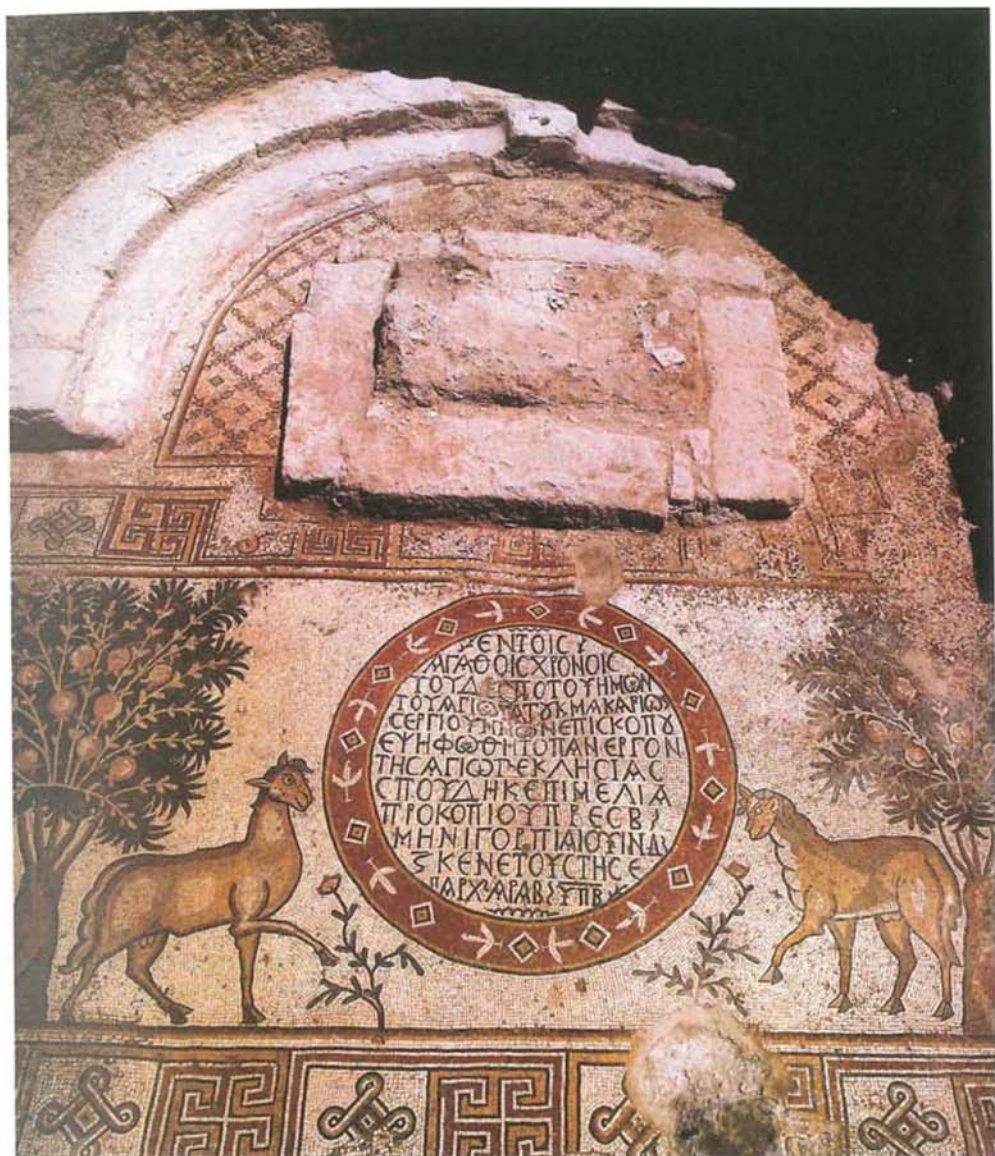


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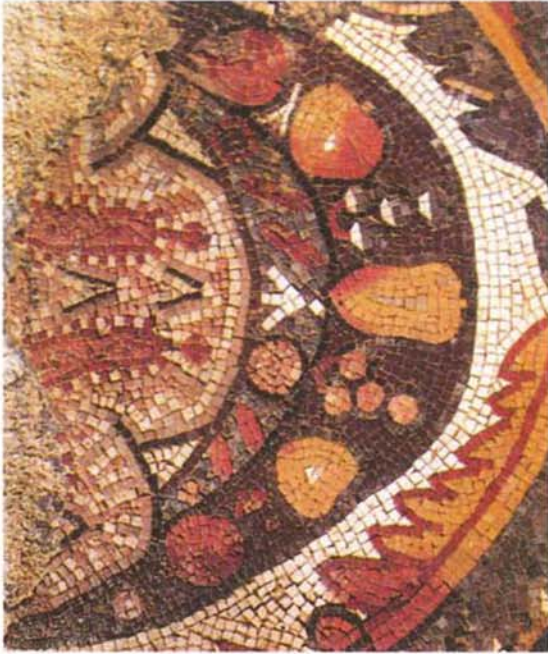
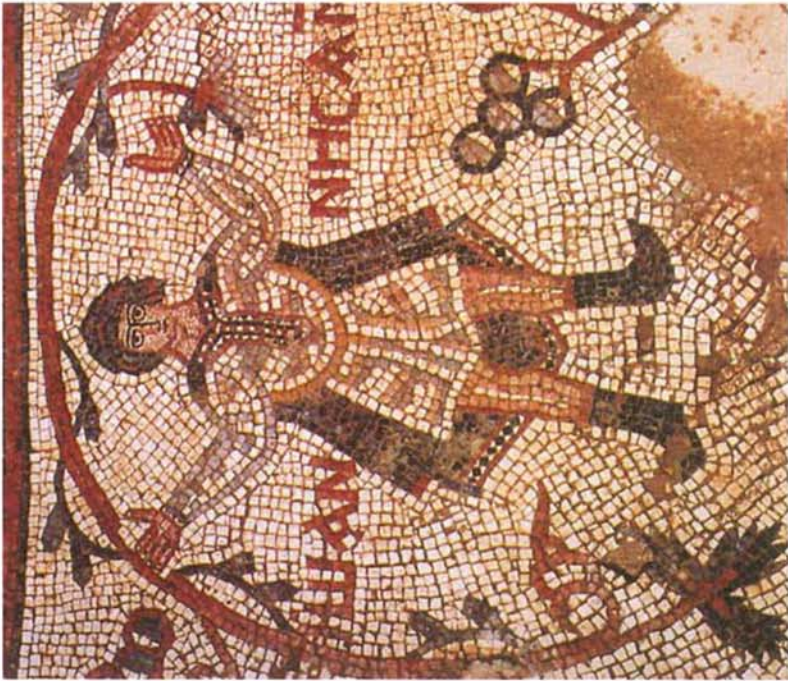


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JUDAISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF BYZANTINE ART

Herbert L. Kessler



Fig. 8: Sacrifice of Isaac, Vatican, BAV, cod. gr. 699, fol. 59r.

BY MEANS OF COLORS: A JUDEO-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE IN
BYZANTINE ICONOGRAPHY

Elisheva Revel-Neher



Fig. 1: *Christian Topography*, Rome, Bib. Vaticana Gr. 699, fol. 76.



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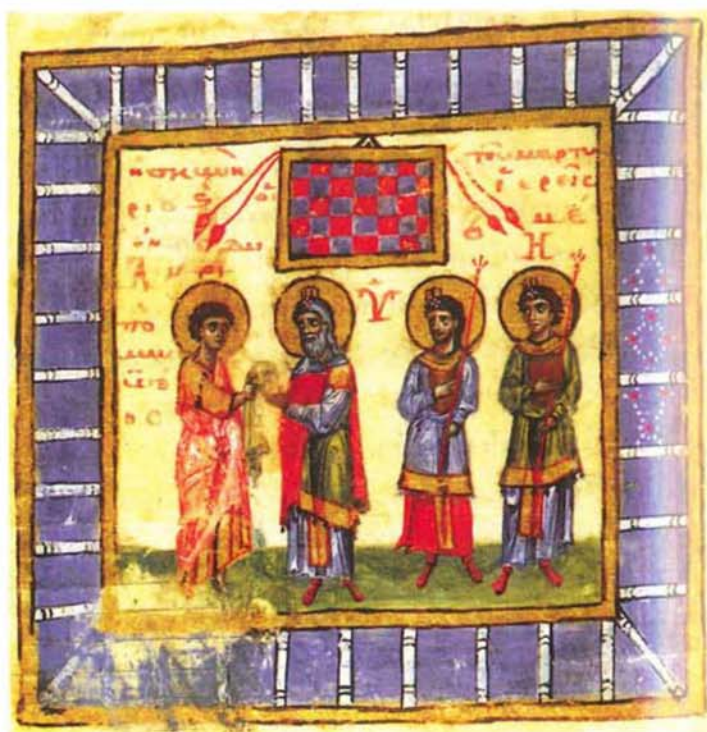


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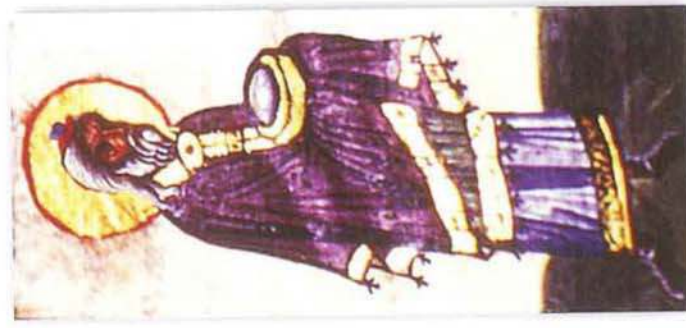


Fig. 12: S. Catherine, Sinai, Ms.Gr. 1186, fol. 84 and details of Oct. Vat.Gr. 747, fol. 141 and Vat.Gr. 746, fol. 241 (photos of the author).



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Fig. 19: Mt. Athos, Pantelemeion 6, fol. 30 (photo of the author).

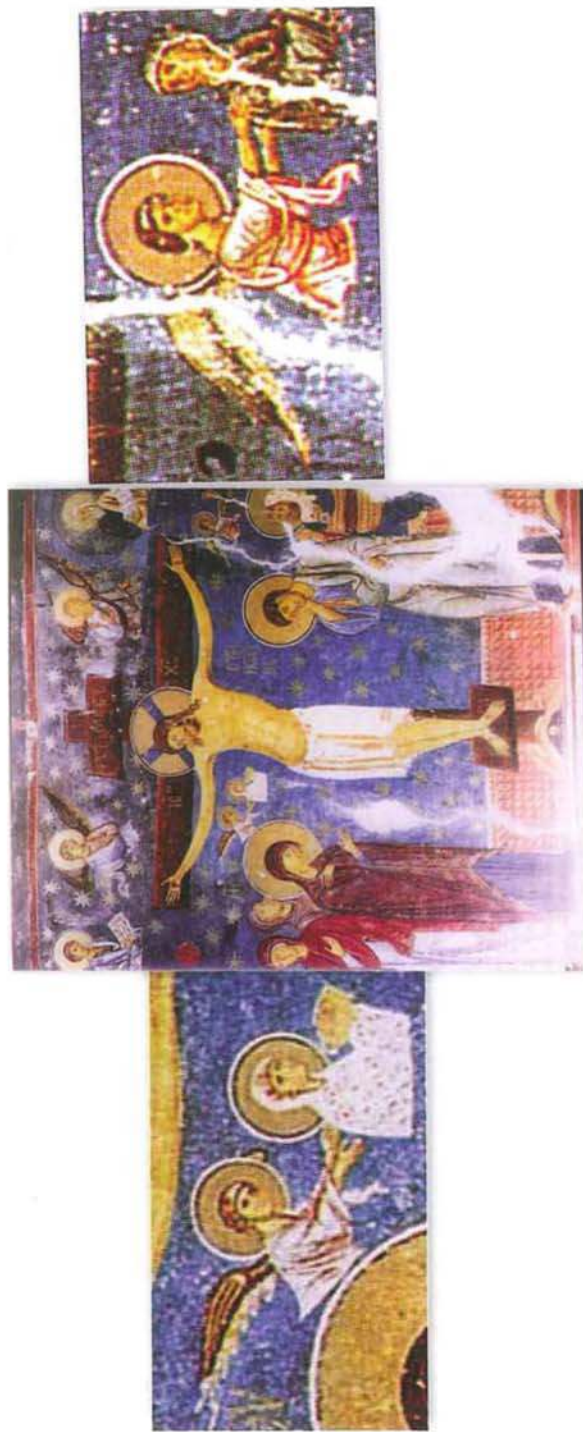


Fig. 21: Nemanja Church, Studenitsa (photo of the author).

REFRACTING CHRISTIAN TRUTHS THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE
BIBLICAL FEMALE IN BYZANTINE ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS

Mati Meyer



Fig. 1: *The Fall*, Octateuch, Vatican City, Bibl. Apost. Vat., gr. 746 (Olim 478), ca. 1150, fol. 37v.



Fig. 2: *Denial of Guilt and the Punishments*, Octateuch, Vatican City, Bibl. Apost. Vat., gr. 747 (Olim 479), ca. 1070, fol. 23v.



Fig. 3: *Covering with Fig Leaves*, Octateuch, Vatican City, Bibl. Apost. Vat., gr. 746 (Olim 478), ca. 1150, fol. 40v.



Fig. 4: *The Hospitality of Abraham*, Octateuch, Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayi Lib., cod. G.I.8, (Gayri Islâmi 8), ca. 1139–52, fol. 78r.



Fig. 5: *David's Repentance*, Theodore Psalter, London, British Library, Add. 19 352, 1066, fol. 63v.



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Fig. 9: *Rebecca giving birth to Esau and Jacob*, Octateuch, Vatican City, Bibl. Apost. Vat., gr. 747 (Olim 479), ca. 1070, fol. 46v.



Fig. 10: *Birth of Phares and Zara*, Octateuch, Vatican City, Octateuch, Bibl. Apost. Vat., gr. 746 (Olim 478), ca. 1150, fol. 119v.

INTRODUCTION

For a whole millennium, Jewish communities thrived in the Byzantine Empire. Oddly enough, they have left few traces in scholarship, in striking contradistinction with Jewish communities and their cultural and literary output from both Europe and the Islamic empire. This oddity cries for an explanation; addressing this embarrassing state is an urgent scholarly desideratum.

The negative assessment of Byzantine civilization as fundamentally decadent, which was widely current in Western worldview for more than a millennium, and left its residue in contemporary scholarship (notwithstanding the great work accomplished in the last decades by the valiant scholars who courageously embarked on redressing the trend¹), could not help but affect the presence of the Byzantine component within Jewish studies. In fact, the fundamentally disdainful attitude of Jewish scholarship towards Byzantine Jewish culture, which ultimately joined the scornful attitude developed by the European West toward Byzantium, antedated it to a great extent. Rooted in the triumph of the Jewish Babylonian culture over its Palestinian rival, a rivalry which goes back to the period better known as Late Antiquity, it kept alive almost all the spurning elements set up during that wrestling phase by the Babylonian propaganda, some of them to be sure not entirely mendacious. Palestinian culture was altogether straightforwardly dismissed and categorized by their rival Babylonians as דברים

¹ Suffice it to mention the various appraisals of Byzantine civilization in the small booklet published by Dumbarton Oaks in celebration of its fiftieth anniversary, especially those by Speros Vryonis and Angeliki Laiou. The Byzantine civilization portrayed in these appraisals was a vibrant and influential culture (in its widest meaning) and its lasting impact was wide-ranging, not only on its southern and eastern as well as northern neighboring peoples and civilizations (Muslims and Slavs respectively), but also on its Christian counterparts in the Latin West, see S. Vryonis, "Byzantine Civilization: A World Civilization," in *Byzantium: A World Civilization*, eds., A. Laiou and H. Maguire (Washington D.C., 1992), 19–35; and A. Laiou, "Byzantium and the West," *ibid.*, 61–81. One should add that in Vryonis's eyes one of the most fundamental elements in the evolution of the matrix of Byzantine civilization was its Judaic monotheism (*ibid.*, 20). For an extensive and formidable survey of Byzantine history and culture (in which the Jews, their history, and culture sadly make only a very scanty appearance), see now J. Shepard, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500–1492* (Cambridge, 2008).

שמד ומנהגי שמה *devarim betelim u-minhagei shmad* (= idle talk and customs of renouncement or abjuration). Indeed the latter statement belongs to a later and “darker” age whereby the Palestinian center succumbed to and surrendered its hegemony to the ascending world of Babylonian Jewry. Up until that period, roughly between the seventh and tenth centuries, Late Antique Jewish Palestine was home to the creative forces of a multi-faceted cultural matrix, comprising a variety of literary genres, artistic works, and eminent institutional presence. It is important to note that when speaking of the above Palestinian Jewish Late Antique scenery, one is essentially referring to the communal concentration in the Galilee (and the Golan), centered around the local houses of learning and synagogues, and benefitting from urban political institutions. However, in other regions of Palestine there was probably much less inter-communal cohesion not to say fragmentation, similar to what is found in the late Greco-Roman Diaspora.² As to the latter, it is difficult to assess the scale of influence rabbinic Jewish Palestinian institutions and culture (some would argue no earlier than the sixth century) had on the Greek- and Latin-speaking Diaspora.³ Thus, being a minority in an empire rallying its power and consolidating it around a single religious cause, one is tempted to inquire whether and to what extent did the Jewish encounter with Christianity during that period help mold Jewish life and culture, and indeed what the contours of that encounter and its lasting impact were on both parties. Notwithstanding the fact that during the course of the period between the fourth to first half of the seventh century, Jews were being progressively marginalized by the imperial authorities as can be gleaned from the law codes (imperial as well as canon), their status deteriorating from a somewhat tolerated to an oppressed minority (exposed in some instances to active attempts of coerced conversion), Christian culture, in diverse ways, left a significant mark on their lives. Polemics and at times eruptions of violence as well as Jewish inroads into distant societies (Himyar) aside, the ongoing dialogue with Christian culture was maintained if not indeed enhanced.

² See Fergus Millar’s recent terse and careful assessment of the Jews as ethnic minority in later Roman Empire, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief Under Theodosius II, (408–450)* (Berkeley, 2006), 123–9.

³ See the discussion in this volume by Irshai (“Confronting a Christian Empire”).

Shifting our gaze to the later Byzantine scenery⁴ (the Byzantines considered themselves to be Romans, descendents of the antique world), it is important to note that the above Babylonian Jewish center claim for supremacy (which carried with it also propagandist overtones) should be understood, among other things, in the context of the waning of the early Byzantine (or Late Roman) power in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean. The rise and meteoric success of Islam in its stead was no doubt instrumental and crucial in making that triumph happen rapidly in the areas brought under Islamic rule. The relative feebleness of theological antagonism between Islam and Judaism,⁵ in comparison with the fervent exclusive claim of Christianity as *Verus Israel*, favored the rapprochement of Caliphs with Exilarchs and Heads of Babylonian Academies, and enabled the latter to take advantage of their prominent position in Baghdad to develop a cultural system remarkably rich in content and impose their authority over all of these areas. It was inevitable that the soundness of that system, triggered as it was by the challenging efflorescence of contemporary Islamic culture, would spread beyond the Islamic world and gradually impose itself all over the Mediterranean region, roughly defined according to Fernand Braudel's wide-ranging picture.

Unless some ground-breaking discovery shows up, at the moment it is impossible to guess the amount of more or less intentionally discarded Palestinian material following the rise of Babylonian hegemony, in addition to the inevitable loss caused by time. One does not have to be a follower of postmodern views in order to presume that, as almost always happens, the defeated would be inflicted with the additional humiliation of *damnata memoria*. The scarcity of sources capable of assessing the vitality of the Palestinian cultural centers thus attached additional support to the verdict that very little was transmitted by them to the treasuries of Jewish culture. Although the recent findings in the Cairo Geniza do suggest that a revision of the image of basic ineptitude of the Palestinian Academies is in order, that image does not seem to have been substituted by a more flattering one. Finally,

⁴ See A. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, 1982), 120–1.

⁵ This does not exclude the predominantly positive views held by early Muslims (until the eleventh century) concerning some aspects of Byzantium's political legacy and leadership (Heraclius), see, N. M. El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, 2004), 21–81. This singular attitude was not reciprocated by the Byzantines, who depicted the Arabs and others as foes and barbarians.

with the fall of Byzantium in 1453, conspicuous Jewish communities were systematically uprooted according to the typical policy of the Turks vis-à-vis the populations of the conquered territories; and the *coup de grâce* to the still existent foundations of native Jewish culture (the so-called *Romaniote* tradition) was conclusively given by the massive immigration of Spanish exiles, who definitely supplanted them. The conventional wisdom of Jewish scholarship that Byzantine Jewry did not really have much to offer was thus firmly installed in the minds of cultural historians long before non-Jewish scholarship would adopt the negative image of Byzantium that centuries of Western political propaganda had elaborated.

Once it was taken for granted that the worldview of the Babylonian Talmudists was the true representative of what is currently called Judaism, and the socio-cultural and institutional frameworks of Jewish society were re-structured according to this new paradigm of knowledge, the components of the older one gradually lost strength, and most of them were eventually discarded or fossilized. Valuable expressions of vibrant cultural production, such as *aggadah* and *piyyut*, were assigned to the realm of inferior intellectual occupations, according to the axiomatic assumption that *halakhah*, based upon the study of the Babylonian Talmud, was to be credited with absolute supremacy. Benjamin Klar's remarks appended to his edition of the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*,⁶ composed in 1054 in Southern Italy and for long time considered as a legitimate source of Byzantine history and culture, are typical in this respect:

The *halakha* flourished in Babylon [... while] in the Land of Israel houses of study were desolate... and the Torah was almost forgotten. In any case, we found that the Babylonian sages cried out loudly that the Jews of the Land of Israel "conduct themselves with relation to the religious commandments not according to the *halakah* but in the manner of apostates [...]". In the Land of Israel the [intellectual] powers were sufficient only for *aggadah*, which took upon itself not only to utter "blessings and words of comfort" but also to describe the wicked decrees of the kingdom of Edom-Rome Byzantium and to prophesize its imminent downfall. In Babylon the Geonim composed responsa on question of *halakah*, continuing the activity of the sages of the Babylonian Talmud;

⁶ The *Chronicle* was named by Klar *Megillath Ahima'az* (i.e. *The Scroll of Ahima'az*). B. Klar, ed., (Jerusalem, 1944) *ibid.*, 152 (note 40), now in a new annotated translation accompanied by a comprehensive historical introduction by R. Bonfil, *History and Folklore in a Medieval Jewish Chronicle: The Family Chronicle of Ahima'az ben Paltiel* (Leiden, 2009).

in the Land of Israel the *payytanim* composed *yozroth* (liturgical compositions) and *Kerovoth* (a different type of liturgical compositions) and other *piyyutim* so as to include in them the content of the prayers and homilies they were forbidden to utter.⁷

It was almost generally agreed that what had survived from Byzantine Jewry, if anything, should in fact be assigned to Byzantine Italy. Leopold Zunz, one of the most influential founding fathers of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, in fact assigned almost every valuable product of medieval homiletic Jewish production to southern Italy. And yet, the rather recent flourishing of Byzantine studies has affected Jewish studies as well. The undeniably scanty amount of works about Byzantine Jewry available up to the middle of the twentieth century⁸ was gradually enhanced by a number of fresh sources, the bulk of which center on the Late Antique period.⁹ The revival was undoubtedly greatly encouraged by the interest aroused by archeological research concerning the Holy Land, strongly boosted by Zionist endeavors related to the foundation of the State of Israel, and notwithstanding the fact that from 638 C.E. onward Palestine was already outside Byzantine rule. The field of Jewish Byzantine studies began to be populated step by step, though admittedly in a very unsystematic way. The dissuading effect upon students of Jewish studies who could not envisage pursuing an academic career as Byzantinists, enabled both by the savor of exoticism of Byzantine studies and by the correlative absence of university departments specifically devoted to Byzantine studies started to decrease, while at the same time students of Jewish history and culture began to realize that the void in our knowledge concerning the *Byzantine Millennium*¹⁰ would inevitably limit and distort any working hypothesis regarding other areas as well. Indeed, how can one confidently presume to set up a plausible image of historical developments

⁷ Klar, *ibid.*, 117–8 (translation by Bonfil, *ibid.*, 10).

⁸ In this context one ought to mention the pioneering studies by J. Starr *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641–1204* (Athens, 1939), and later A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London, 1971); Idem, *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium* (Jerusalem, 1995) (a collection of studies).

⁹ In fact, the volume of research on Jews and Judaism in Late Antique studies has not only been on the rise in recent years, but their integration in the discourse on Late Antiquity in general has been greatly enhanced, something that is lacking in contemporary studies of the later Byzantine era.

¹⁰ The label is borrowed from the title of book *Das Byzantinische Jahrtausend* in which the late Hans Georg Beck (1910–1999), one of the outstanding contemporary Byzantinists, outlined the characteristics displayed for one thousand years by the Empire continuously dubbed as decadent and dissolute.

in Western Europe without any knowledge about possible previous utterances carried out and eventually transmitted from the contiguous Byzantine area? A number of suggestions hesitantly put forward in the course of the last two decades appeared to confirm very strongly the feeling that a thorough breakthrough was much to be desired. The challenge was taken up by our research group under the most accommodating auspices of the *Scholion-Interdisciplinary Research Center in Jewish Studies* at the Hebrew University which undertook to “put Byzantium on the map of Jewish studies” as it were, namely to offer a new and extensive platform for a more comprehensive future integration of Jewish Byzantium within the wider orbit of Byzantine studies (of which it so far was quite oblivious), by developing suitable methods permitting a better, more precise understanding of the mechanisms of communication and transmission of knowledge as well as interaction between the Jewish minority and Christian majority cultures.¹¹ We sought to confront the Jewish experience in Byzantium as a case study in the historical sociology of knowledge, in the *longue durée*. The unique opportunity offered by Scholion encouraged us to hope that the model we sought to build would also help us understand the complex and dialectical cultural relationships between majority and minorities in other cultural contexts, such as Jews and Muslims, and also Jews and Christians in Islamic lands, as well as Orthodox and heterodox Christians in Byzantium. There were obvious implications for the proposed research touching for instance upon a wide area of various different issues like diglossia, translation, literature, representation and (mis)perception of the other, law, religion, science, folklore, art, and architecture. Admittedly, one encounters a slight lack of self-confidence when approaching this giant undertaking, which is further amplified by an imprecise feeling of uncertainty on how to enter the project efficiently and effectively—efficiently inasmuch as method is concerned, i.e. how are we to address the disciplines recently added to those traditionally held as auxiliary in Jewish studies, to wit psychology and/or anthropology; effectively inasmuch as purpose is con-

¹¹ This is a most important segment of Byzantine literary culture. Byzantium served as an important repository for classical heritage and a channel by which these treasures (texts and traditions) were transmitted to the West, as can be gleaned from the world of the late Medieval and early Renaissance period, see in short, F. Tinnefeld, art. “Byzantium,” *Brill’s New Pauly: Classical Tradition*, Vol. I, (Leiden, 2006), cols. 606–8.

cerned, i.e. how are we to revisit and reallocate the past within actual and tangible contexts? How are we to carry out an intellectual exercise aimed at discovering in the Byzantine context the dynamics of the dialogic situation confronting the Self and the Other, Jews and Christians, minority and majority? What does the antithetic couplet minority/majority really mean? With these sets of questions we set out on our way to explore the following dialectics of interaction between the minority (Jewish) and majority (Christian) civilizations in Byzantium. The following represents an over-view of the core issues with which our group at *Scholion* was grappling.

One trait constantly characterizes the Jewish situation in the Diaspora, especially following the ultimate loss of national independence in the Land of Israel with the defeat of Bar Kokhba: notwithstanding some remarkable but nonetheless negligible exceptions, Jews were constantly and everywhere (even in their own land) demographically inferior, that is a minority living in the midst of a demographically superior setting (that is, within a majority of non-Jews), and yet maintaining a remarkable distinction of their own.¹² This irrefutable fact is obviously explicable, for as a rule the Jews were unquestionably powerless and one has to wonder why the non-Jews refrained from making use of the political and coercive power at their disposal in order to rid themselves of dissenters, which seems to be a universally held human tendency. Indeed, one does not have to endorse radical definitions of the Middle Ages as an *Age of Faith* and imagine such scenarios as fitting exclusively medieval perceptions of religious belief in cultural superiority and aspirations in order to propagate it among unbelievers. One has to keep in mind that the use of force in order to meet the tremendous challenge represented by the resistance to what sociologists, anthropologists, and ethnographers call *acculturation*, especially in cases where it may be perceived as endangering the wellbeing of the group, is by no means an exclusively medieval feature, although in our times it may need more sophisticated arguments to justify it. As Heinrich Graetz put it a long time ago, protestant resistance to the acculturating pressures of the surrounding non-Jewish society appears indeed as the pivotal axis around which the entire Jewish history evolved.

¹² Though there are differing views on the latter, see, N. de Lange "Jews in the Age of Justinian," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed., M. Maas (Cambridge, 2005), 401–26.

Due to the inherent baffling connotation of the term acculturation and the far-reaching implications it may have on our topic, resistance to acculturation as an overall portrayal of the phenomenon may be deeply misleading. As a matter of fact, the term acculturation, which American anthropologists started to utilize during the 1880s, was and still is typical to ethnographic research focusing upon so-called primitive societies, and includes the Christianization of natives in colonized lands. It basically implies colonially biased ethnocentrism, which first of all assumes a value judgment of the parties in terms of superiority and inferiority and secondly suggests that the relationship between the two different cultures has to be viewed in terms of the colonizing power and of the potential use of violence. The gradual reception of Western civilization by the "natives" thus confirms the assumption that Western civilization is indeed superior, that is to say that the cultural values of the powerful are superior vis-à-vis those of the powerless. Acculturation then is ultimately equal with cultural integration of the group holding an inferior culture within the group holding a superior one. From such a standpoint, the consequences of the encounter are consistently represented as the gradual disintegration of the natives' cultural structure and its subsequent restructuring compatible with that of the colonizers', amid the more or less intense creation of syncretistic new forms. American sociology even promoted such an approach to the extent of a guiding operational principle according to a very simple formula: integration should conserve cultural differences inasmuch as they help, or at least do not impede achieving the good goal of the consensually agreed wellbeing of the nation; disturbing cultural components should consequently be effaced. Minorities defying or rejecting the efforts of the forces of acculturation applied by the monopolizing majority display confidence in their being on the right side. Thus, unsuccessful accomplishments of one camp appear as the success of the other camp.

From such a perspective, however, the very concepts of *majority* and *minority* which are fundamental for our discussion become less self-evident than we may have imagined; as a matter of fact, they lose their demographic connotation. For, if one assumes that successful acculturation means that the culture of the powerful is superior to the culture of the powerless, the result of the encounter between the two can no longer be assumed as a parameter for evaluating the confronting parts in terms of demographic majority or minority. Majority and minority wind up displaying paradoxically inverted meanings: few powerful

colonizers rise as a significant majority, while the overwhelmingly more numerous but powerless natives represent a negligible minority. To mention one example, relevant to the topic of our discussion, the Palestinian Jews, certainly not a negligible demographic minority during the first period of Byzantine rule, would appear from such a perspective as a minority vis-à-vis the less numerous but powerful, who would be viewed as a majority.

Jewish history as a whole represents a most telling example of a successful refusal of acculturation, since a successful one would undoubtedly have caused the Jews to vanish or assimilate, as happened to so many peoples dominated by powerful conquerors. It remains, however, important to acknowledge that at least during the early phase of encounter between Jews and Christians (i.e. Christian Imperial Rome) there were no concerted efforts to acculturate the Jews in the extreme sense of the word, that is to cause them to convert. Late Roman Imperial law strove only, as stated above, to marginalize them in various ways. What significance are we then to assign to the concepts of *majority*, *minority*, and *acculturation* in the case of Jewish history? What does the successful refusal of the powerless Jewish groups to succumb to the acculturating efforts of the overwhelmingly dominant powerful non-Jewish groups mean in terms of the supposed connection between cultural superiority and an effectively acculturating power? And how are we to address the acquiescence of the powerful dominant non-Jewish groups to the refusal of the powerless Jewish groups to succumb to their acculturating efforts?

Such remarkable singularity calling for an explanation has in fact been addressed in different ways: according to the traditional apologetic Jewish ideological argument, including its providential varieties, it goes against the belief that political and military power correspond to cultural superiority and rather means that the culture of the powerful, though viewed as majority, has constantly been inferior to the powerless, tiny but nonetheless superior Jewish one.¹³ According to the traditional Christian argument, it signifies that the Jews have systematically been subjected to diabolic or otherwise irrational conditioning inhibitions that prevent integration. Finally, the flipside of the tradi-

¹³ In terms of narrative, this would be represented by the varieties of the myth of the victory of the few against the many (such as the myths of Hanukkah or of the Zionist achievement in the Independence War of the State of Israel).

tional (at present deeply problematic) argument implicitly assumes the validity of the image of the powerful as majority and of the powerless as minority, indicating that the gentiles have systematically been following irrational conditioning attitudes based on fundamentalist anti-Semitic biases preventing the welcoming of Jews as equals.

When it comes, however, to the application of such simplistic overarching or apologetic explanations to concrete historical contexts, historians are confronted with the perennial question of agency and its incentives in the decision-making processes of the actors themselves. Though it is admittedly impossible to set up a narrative covering the entire array of the constituting elements of human motivation, historians may nonetheless honestly endeavor to draw a reasonable picture and verify its plausibility by means of the customary testing mechanisms of their discipline. Part of such an effort, our work endeavors to follow the evolution and transmutation of the above described paradigm.

Thus, upon the transformation of the Roman Empire into a Christian Empire, Christian rulers found the Jews an integral part of the world they inherited from their pagan predecessors. Their presence naturally raised the question what such an overtly dissident socio-cultural body could actually mean in terms of the wellbeing of the Christian body, and what should be done with them. *Mutatis mutandis*, the question was basically the same for the Jews too: what did the transformation of the pagan empire into a Christian one actually mean in terms of the wellbeing of the Jewish socio-cultural body and how were they to behave in the new situation. Such questions were but one part of the more general question of the definition of the Self vis-à-vis the Other, that is to say how did men and women of both groups conceive of their affiliations and perceive their identities, and how did such conceptions and perceptions affect their perceptions of the other group and their decisions of how to act with them.

What does "definition of the Self vis-à-vis the Other" mean? In psychology one may safely assign to the category of the Other all individuals who are not Oneself, the line of separation clearly demarcated, a corollary of physical individuation. When it comes to collective definitions, it is of course no longer possible to assume delimitations as neat and immediate as in the case of individual personalities. And yet, we may refer to the almost immediate perception of social space as allocating a well defined area to people presenting such strong affini-

ties as to justify the idea that they are united by some distinctive bond according to which they assign specific individuals to one of two distinct categories: *us* (i.e. people situated inside the group) and *them* (i.e. people situated outside the group). Such rough demarcation, however, does not exonerate us from addressing more precisely the intricate problem of defining the parameters required in order to be assigned to one category rather than to the other, as well as the equally intricate problem of delineating the borderline separating the two spaces.

Borderlines are associated with a variety of images. At times they are perceived as defensive fences against the intrusion of hostile elements, while at others they rather appear as obstacles to the freedom of movement. Some thus strive to make them definitely impervious, while others strive to make them more permeable, or even to remove them altogether in order to make movement easier. All of these metaphorical images refer to processes of changing definitions of *us* and *them* and of constantly restructuring the space that foreigners should consider off limits. Should one wish to visually trace a borderline dividing Christians and Jews in the course of history, one would be faced by a multiplicity of situations hardly fitting one such single line. And yet, inasmuch as assimilating integration or physical elimination was not achieved, that is, inasmuch as distinction was not totally effaced and the presence of *them* aside *us* was granted, one has to assume the existence of such a defining line or zone between the two groups. As a matter of fact, physical elimination of the Jews was only exceptionally embraced as a policy, in striking contrast with the approach toward other dissident groups.¹⁴ Our question concerning the “definition of the Self vis-à-vis the Other” splits into two separate questions: First, why was this so? In other words, what caused the powerful dominant group to tolerate the presence of the Jews within its socio-cultural space? And second, how did the resulting situation of proximity play out within the Christian and the Jewish Self respectively?

¹⁴ Indeed what is described here is essentially similar to the social and cultural model of rival societies in similar situations (minority vs. majority) described by Hélène Ahrweiler as reflecting a situation of *alterity*. This situation presupposes identity, coexistence, and mutual interaction of dialogue within hostility, see “L’image de l’autre et les mécanismes de l’altérité,” *XVI^e Congrès international des science historiques; Rapport I* (Stuttgart, 1985), 60–6.

As is well-known, borderlines separating one geopolitical space from another quite often undergo processes of change under the pressure of the stirring forces of history. We may assume the same to hold true for borderlines separating socio-cultural spaces. Just as military or political forces cause changes in geographic borderlines between states, intellectual forces can produce alterations in cultural patterns; cognitive attitudes can trigger modifications in gender or racial configurations, and so on and so forth. Changes are accordingly induced by allocating new parameters in transforming situations and conditions. Suffice it to mention for instance how Muslims had to revise the category of *dhimmi* in order to include ethnic groups which at first glance should have been assigned to *dar-al-ḥarb*; or how Jews had to wrestle with the category of Jewishness in order to cope with Karaites or with conversos. Modifications of border lines always provoked the restructuring of identities—who should be considered part of *us* and who should rather be one of *them*, whose inclusion should be considered reasonable and who should rather be excluded and considered a foreigner.

Should we be able to assemble answers to complex questions about affects and orientations characteristic of the members of each group, especially of the individuals more influential than others in the shaping of public opinion and in its translation into ruling policy, we would be able to assemble the resulting data of the specific configurations of the worldviews and operational tendencies of both groups. In addressing the above-mentioned fundamental question of the acquiescence of the powerful dominant non-Jewish groups to the refusal of the feeble Jewish groups to succumb to their acculturating efforts, historians have indeed tried to set up such lists of factors. In doing so, they appear to have adopted one of two opposite premises: either to consider Jews and Christians as belonging to basically opposite camps, *us* and *them*; or to consider them as belonging to the same camp.

How are we then to represent the mutual perception of Jews and Christians? From both standpoints, both constantly placed themselves in dialogic situations with their neighbors, situations that variously implied challenge and response. In fact both antagonists constantly sought confirmation of their belief; for the Christians such confirmation was eventually hallmarked by the conversion of Jewish adversaries who finally recognized the superiority of vibrant Christianity vis-à-vis fossilized Judaism, while for Jews, successful resistance to the Christian temptation unequivocally implied and proved the superior-

ity of Judaism. In all times and places we are thus confronted with two differing entities tightly grasping one another. Although everyday life only exceptionally degenerated into aggressive contest that might jeopardize coexistence, itself a necessary prerequisite for the dialogic encounter to take place, challenge and response was constantly subtly implied, in a variety of both conscious and subconscious perceptions of the surrounding world.

In any case, one cannot underestimate the crucial importance of the findings concerning Jewish attitudes and behavioral tendencies in such situations for the understanding of Christian mentalities. For inasmuch as a given attitude is situated in the areas of common beliefs and perceptions of the surrounding world without causing any substantial problem, one would be justified in assuming that since the religious component of that attitude was not of paramount importance, Jewish attitudes and behavioral tendencies can as a rule function as some kind of litmus test to determine the specific weight of specific religious components in the shaping of worldviews.

The fruits of the joint scholarly effort, that of our group at *Scholion* alongside the contributions of eminent experts on Byzantium from abroad, are displayed in the volume at hand. Thus, apart from wide ranging historical surveys on Byzantine Jewry together with regional and ethnographic descriptions of important historical chapters and unique aspects pertaining to the Jews of Byzantium, the volume includes a substantial number of chapters concerning the encounters (tensions and dialogues) between Jews and Christians as they manifested themselves in literary sources (Christian and Jewish historiography and chronography) and matters pertaining to real life (Halakha, legal status, and economical livelihood), all natural components in a volume of this kind. Alongside these issues, the volume contains some more salient features. The first concerns the uniqueness of Jewish Byzantium as a meeting point of several languages: Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic and the way in which this convergence of different tongues manifested itself (in the parlance, *Piyyut*, and the versions of the Bible). The second concerns the abundance and richness of Jewish visual expression (iconography, manuscript illumination, and synagogue decoration) and their impact on Jewish Byzantine culture.

Although the various authors of the essays included in this volume differ naturally in standpoints, focuses, and answers, they nonetheless have one principle in common: they assume that the encounter between Jews and Christians during the lengthy Byzantine era was of a dialogic nature which begs description.

PART I

SETTING THE STAGE

CONFRONTING A CHRISTIAN EMPIRE: JEWISH LIFE AND CULTURE IN THE WORLD OF EARLY BYZANTIUM*

Oded Irshai

On an early spring morning in the fourth century C.E., the Palestinian sage Hanina entered the service in the new and small but elaborately decorated synagogue of Hamat Tiberias. On his way out he was intercepted by a certain Pinehas, a wood merchant from the nearby village of Kifrah, who asked Rabbi Hanina how he could have set foot in a House of God whose floor was adorned with a figure clad like an emperor, holding a scepter and a bronze globe, with seven rays coming out of his head. Hanina was not entirely surprised by this query, for he had been perplexed when he discovered, some months earlier, this iconographical ornament. Now he replied to Pinehas that, in his judgment, the figure, though resembling the usual representation of the pagan sun god Helios, might be interpreted simply as a personification of the sun. On second thought, Hanina added, the imperial figure could be regarded as the personification of the Messiah, whom the liturgical poets of the day described as the “Light of Israel,” “the Eternal Sun.” And, he went on, he had heard that some of the Jews’ most bitter opponents, the Christian Preachers, faced the same dilemma concerning the adoration of the sun among their own flocks—and had come up with similar interpretations.

The above fake episode encapsulates vividly the sentiments of the Jews encountering this and similar icons on the floors of some half a-dozen synagogues in Byzantine Palestine. It reflects the cultural encounters and tensions between that society and the surrounding pagan and Christian world of Late Antiquity as well as some of the internal cultural concerns of a society living with growing apocalyptic anxieties.¹ It is important to lay out at the start of this essay fundamental

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¹ One ought obviously to place some limitations on the interpretation of Jewish art from that period. On the considerations involved in this process, see the most comprehensive study yet of the Jewish Synagogue: L. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*:

caveats, the first concerning its geographical scope and the second its overall aims. Many if not most of the surveys on the history of the Jews in Late Antiquity focus their accounts predominantly on the lives and culture of the Jews in Palestine, for that region is relatively better documented. With this in mind, the following survey will proceed along the current limitations imposed on our research due to the state of the relevant sources. As regards to the main thrust of this chapter, it intends to deal with social-cultural issues pertaining to the transmutations and changes in Jewish life during the period under discussion (fourth to seventh centuries) as they were being formed under the influence and impact of the surrounding hegemonic (Christian) culture.²

The period between the fourth and seventh centuries C.E. was one of momentous change for the inhabitants of Palestine.³ Gradually,

The First Thousand Years (New Haven, 2000), 569–70. The appearance of the symbol of Helios, albeit in different forms, in Palestinian synagogues has aroused over the years immense interest and a great deal of speculation and scholarship, at times used as a cornerstone in the description of a flourishing “non-rabbinical” Judaism in late Roman Palestine and at others portrayed as part of the normative fold of contemporary Judaism. For the latest interesting attempt to contextualize the Hammat Tiberis Helios within the local religious, and cultural scenery see, R. Talgam, “The Zodiac and Helios in the Synagogue: Between Paganism and Christianity,” in *Follow the Wise: Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee I. Levine*, eds., Z. Weiss, et al. (Winona Lake, 2010), 63–80 (Hebrew, containing earlier views and bibliography). More on that infra, note 108.

² This comment is not in any way meant to sideline important work on the Jews in the eastern and western orbit of the late Roman Diaspora, on the contrary. However, the cultural dimensions of the Jews’ lives in the Diaspora are more blurred see, however, for instance Fergus Millar’s important recent study, “Christian Emperors, Christian Church, and the Jews of the Diaspora in the Greek East, 379–450 C.E.,” *JJS* 55 (2004): 1–24. It is also important to note that our survey does not include anecdotes and events however important (such as the Emperor Julian’s attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple). Our task here is limited to the portrayal of the main thrust of the period at hand. For a wider survey on Christian attitudes to Jews and Judaism in Late Antiquity, consult P. Fredriksen and O. Irshai, “Christian Anti-Judaism: Polemics and Policies,” *Cambridge History of Judaism Vol. 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed., S. T. Katz (Cambridge, 2006), 977 ff. For a panoramic perspective on the inter-religious dynamics during the period under discussion, see now G. Stroumsa, “Religious Dynamics between Christians and Jews in Late Antiquity,” *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. 2: Constantine to c. 600*, eds., A. Casiday and F. Norris (Cambridge, 2008), 151–72.

³ The chronological boundaries used in the current chapter do not conform with the now much accepted periodization of the recently constructed (based on religious and cultural premises) era of Late Antiquity. This construct, whose chronological boundaries span the period between the years 250 C.E. and 750 C.E., as a modern historiographic and cultural concept is too broad a topic to be dealt with here, however, its birth and ensuing history has recently been succinctly presented in Stephan Rebenich’s short survey, in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed., Philip Rousseau (Oxford, 2009), 76–92 (with extensive bibliography). Rebenich describes the most

Palestine ceased to be predominantly Jewish. Most of the Jews were concentrated in the Galilee and the Golan (though not in all of in both regions) but much of the country's non-Jewish population had been won over by Christianity, which ruled the land under the aegis of the Roman emperors. The Jews had lost their central leadership, the patriarchate; their copious literary legacy was redacted and completed; and the centers of their spiritual creativity, the academies (*yeshivot*), were in decline, though the extent of the latter development is far from clear. A strong trend of decentralization augmented the status of the local communities whose public lives centered on the synagogues, in which liturgical poets, preachers, and interpreters from Hebrew into Aramaic were active. In the words of the Midrash, "A small city, that is a synagogue, and the few people there—that is a community" (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 9:21). In short, the cultural center of gravity shifted over time from the intellectual elite of the academy to the "masses" in the synagogues. The void created among Diaspora Jews, who had previously been under the sway of the Palestinian patriarchate,⁴ was increasingly filled by the leadership in Babylon, which by the early days of the Muslim conquest established itself as the dominant cultural and political center of Jewry. Thus the saga of Palestine and its Jewish inhabitants in this period is of utmost relevance to our understanding of the transformation of Jewish life, institutions, and culture from the early centuries of the Common Era to the Middle Ages.⁵

recent phase (of the last forty years or so) in Late Antique studies as a somewhat constantly shifting paradigm from the Brownian (named after Peter Brown) "intellectually, artistically, and religiously productive epoch characterized by change, diversity, and creativity" (ibid. 90), to the recently revived old model (albeit in a new guise) of "Decline and Fall." For some reservations concerning the construct and the current debate surrounding it see, A. Marcone, "A Long Late Antiquity? Considerations on a Controversial Periodization," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1/1(2008): 4–19. As regards to determining the parameters for a secure periodization for Jewish Late Antiquity albeit in a Palestino-centric guise and its undelying premises, see L. Levine, "Between Rome and Byzantium in Jewish History: Documentation, Reality, and Issue of Periodization" in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine—Christian Palestine*, ed., idem (Jerusalem, 2004), 7–48 (Hebrew).

⁴ On this see our discussion below, pp. 32–36.

⁵ For a comprehensive survey on the history of the Jews in Palestine during the period under discussion, see M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine: A Political History from the Bar Kokhba War to the Arab Conquest* (Oxford, 1976). However, see also G. Stemberger, *Jews and Christians in the Holy Land: Palestine in the Fourth Century* (Edinburgh, 2000). Stemberger's study, though covering only the initial part of the period, offers many new insights. For a current most insightful appraisal of the

For the most part, these alterations occurred as a result not of internal Jewish needs or pressures but of the strife caused by the growing presence and power of Christianity in Palestine. From the fourth century on, Palestine became a focus of interest for Christians who, with the help of the emperors and other powerful figures, transformed their utopian religious vision into reality.⁶ The barren country's historical sites became holy places and shrines, and the idea of Terra Sancta (the Holy Land) was thus formed. The annexation of the local collective (though primarily Jewish) memory and topography had an impact on the Jews' sense of identity, though the strategies by which the Jews combated this encroaching situation (echoed predominantly in rabbinic traditions) are yet enigmatic.⁷ The encounter with a victorious Christianity and some of its most zealous representatives was aptly recorded by a contemporary liturgical poet: "We do not have the splendid attire of the *kohen* [priest], and the wearers of sackcloth [monks] rule over us."⁸

Apart from this and a few other scanty references in fragmentary collections of rabbinical legal rulings, Midrashic texts, liturgical poetry, and apocalyptic treatises, our main sources of information on the life and culture of the Jews of this period are Christian: the writings of the Church fathers and Church historians, pilgrims' itineraries, polemical disputations and imperial and canon law codes.

I. THE THIRD-CENTURY "CRISIS" AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE EMPIRE

From the early fourth century, the Roman Empire, under the rule of the still enigmatic figure of the Emperor Constantine the Great,⁹ was

social-cultural history of the Jews mainly in late antique Palestine, see S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, 2001), 179–289.

⁶ See R. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven, 1992); A. Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and the Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, 2004). For more on the makeup of late antique Palestine as a contested arena see now H. Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2008). For a limited gaze on the mechanism of Christian appropriation albeit in its earliest stages, see, O. Irshai, "The Christian Appropriation of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century: The Case of the Bordeaux Pilgrim," *JQR* 99 (2009): 465–86.

⁷ See J. Levinson, "There's No Place like Home: Rabbinic Responses to the Christianization of Palestine," (forthcoming).

⁸ Cairo Genizah fragment, *Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter*, H 6.38.

⁹ A recent treatment of Constantine's political policies and cultural endeavors has been offered by H. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance*

slowly being transformed into a dominant Christian society. What exactly precipitated the atmosphere that led to this political and cultural transition is still debated, but there is hardly any doubt that its early stages were already visible during the third century, when Rome witnessed immense internal political instability—an eclipse of the Senate's power and a corresponding rise in the influence of the army—exacerbated by economic hardships (debased currency, agricultural failure) and mounting military pressures from barbarian tribes to the north-west and the assertive Persian-Sassanian Kingdom in the east.¹⁰

The repeated and devastating Persian invasions during the middle of the century must have had some impact on the Jews residing on either side of the Euphrates in Mesopotamia, Syria, and in Palestine. Roman rule in the East was fragile, and though some of the soldier-emperors managed to negotiate settlements with the mighty Persian emperor Shapur I, the region was far from secure. In some intellectual circles (among which we find the Rabbis), the political situation and the attendant anxiety were seen as signs that the ailing Roman Empire was on its last legs. However, when Rome was rescued (during the 260s) from a Persian military victory and humiliation by its client principedom Palmyra in the Syrian desert, sentiments of deep disappointment were voiced. In both instances rabbinic utterances disclose a sense of what could be easily regarded as apocalyptic frustration.¹¹

An interesting encounter from the period, recorded in the rabbinic commentary on Genesis, illustrates the Jews' intense expectation that Rome would fall:

A *hegemon* [Roman governor] asked a man of the House of Silani [a respected Jewish family in Tiberias]: "Who will seize [power] after

(Baltimore, 2000). For the current views in the heated discussion over Constantine's actions and reforms see now T. D. Barnes, "Review Article: Was there a Constantinian Revolution," *JLA* 2 (2009): 374–84.

¹⁰ On the third-century "crisis" and its different dimensions, see D. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire: A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Book of the Sibylline Oracle* (Oxford, 1990), 3–69. For a more toned-down view, see A. Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century* (London, 1999), 1–38. The possibility that the so-called third-century "crisis," at least in its economic manifestation, had little if indeed any impact on Roman Palestine has been recently put forward by D. Bar, "Was There a 3rd–c. Economic Crisis in Palestine?" in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East, 3 (JRA Supplementary Series, 49)*, ed., J. Humphrey (Portsmouth, 2002), 43–54.

¹¹ See O. Irshai, "Dating the Eschaton: Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Calculations in Late Antiquity," in *Apocalyptic Time*, ed., A. Baumgarten (Leiden, 2000), 113ff., esp. 135–9.

us?" He [of the House of Silani] brought a piece of paper, took a quill, and wrote on it: "Then his brother emerged, holding onto the heel of Esau; he said: see old things from a new old man." (Genesis Rabbah 63:9)

Towards the end of the century, it seemed that conditions had ripened for Rome's complete collapse. When a Dalmatian cavalry officer named Diocletian seized power in 284 under somewhat suspicious circumstances,¹² people thought that he, like his predecessors, would not last long. In a Palestinian Midrash, he is portrayed as the "one heralding the last kingdom of Edom."¹³

However, much to the chagrin of the sages, this emperor succeeded in holding onto his throne for some two decades, finally relinquishing it of his own free will. Diocletian demanded that his subjects receive him with rituals of quasi-divine adoration, but he set the empire on a new path by presenting a model of orderly, planned succession that would give the empire political, defensive, and economic stability. In the Roman Orient, he re-divided some of the provinces, among them the Provincia Palestina, to which he annexed territories from Arabia. This made Palestine the largest and most important of the provinces that bordered on Sassanian territory.¹⁴

Far more significant for our discussion here were Diocletian's religious reforms. He created a unifying religio-political mechanism through which he led the entire empire towards a monarchy under the exclusive aegis of Jupiter and Hercules, whom the Romans also venerated as a god. At the core of this new imperial theology was a system of divine cooperation with the temporal monarch, which in essence resembled Christian theological constructs.¹⁵ The growing affinity of

¹² See *Historia Augusta, Carus, Carinus and Numerian*, 13.

¹³ *Genesis Rabbah* 83:4: "A vision appeared to R. Ammi in a dream. Today Magdiel has become king, said he [R. Ammi]: Yet one more king is required for Edom [i.e., Rome]." On the midrash, see D. Sperber's attractive interpretation, "Aluf Magdiel: Diocletian," in his *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat Gan, 1994), 127–30. Compare this to a contradicting, extremely confident mood concerning Diocletian's achievements reflected in a Latin dedicatory inscription from Heliopolis in Syria, describing him as "the liberator of the Roman world, the bravest and most dutiful and most unconquered," *Inscriptions grecques et latines de La Syrie* 6, no. 2771.

¹⁴ See T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, 1982), 213–5.

¹⁵ See J. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford, 1979), 242–4, and G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequence of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993), 53–4. An up-to-date evaluation of the political and

ideals between pagans and Christians exacerbated the tension, for, the closer the two religious camps came to each other, the greater the pagans' need to create effective symbols of political allegiance to the empire and the emperor.¹⁶

Animosity toward the Christians broke out in full force throughout the empire when decrees were issued between 303 and 312 (though in the West they were brought to an end by 306) that imposed public cultic sacrifice on all. Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, recorded at length (in a treatise named *Martyrs of Palestine*) the lives, and especially the trials, of Christians who were executed, banished, or sentenced to hard labor. This Christian ordeal, which according to Eusebius surpassed any similar event elsewhere in the empire, can be said with hindsight to have been a kind of sacrificial altar on which the local land, Roman Palestine, was presented to the Christians.¹⁷ For the Jews, the internal tension that accompanied the persecutions may have added another dimension to the wobbly image of the state and their sense of its approaching end, but they were to be disappointed. Rome did not collapse, it merely changed its appearance. Constantine, who during the years of the "Great Persecutions" was ruler of the western regions

religious atmosphere leading to the "Great Persecution" has been recently offered by B. Leadbetter, *Galerius and the Will of Diocletian* (London, 2009), 114–34.

¹⁶ In recent years, scholars have made it quite clear that the path leading to the success of Christianity in the fourth century was laid by third-century Roman emperors who reformed the state religion, unified it, and granted it a "monotheistic" aura. Such was the case in Aurelian's cult of Sol, the sun, a decade prior to Diocletian's accession, and was most probably the case already in Decius's day, when persecution of the Christians was conducted under the notion that Roman religion was evolving into a universal organism; thus, compliance with decrees relating to it was a declaration of membership in the Roman Empire and adherence to the imperial religion. See, e.g., J. Rives, "The Decree of Decius and the Religion of Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1990): 135–54. If accepted, this reconstruction significantly alters the prevailing theory dating the cultural change to Constantine's day and attributing it in large part to his own efforts. According to the new evaluation, Christianity's triumph had begun as early as circa 250 C.E. See, e.g., T. D. Barnes, "Constantine and Christianity: Ancient Evidence and Modern Interpretations," *Zeitschrift für Antike und Christentum* 2 (1998): 274–94.

¹⁷ The driving force behind the creation of the matrix of sacred space in the new Christian world was the developing cult of saints and martyrs. For one exemplary instance describing the path between martyrdom and cultic reverence, see Eusebius, *Martyrs of Palestine*, 11, 28. Cf. R. Markus, "How on Earth Could Peace Become Holy," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 257–71. For a more comprehensive and up-to-date view of this aspect of Christian culture, see B. Caseau, "Sacred Landscape," in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, eds., G. Bowersock, P. Brown, and O. Garbar (Cambridge, 1999), 21–59.

of the empire, where right after his proclamation in 306 ended the persecutions (Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 24.7) issued an edict of universal toleration of the Christians following the end of the persecutions (in 313).¹⁸

The embracing of Christianity by Constantine was to have a decisive influence on the political and religious character and culture of Palestine. The local rabbis, whose explicit reactions to this great transformation have not come down to us,¹⁹ found some consolation in the change, and the form of their expectations of the approaching salvation adjusted to the new reality. The support of an official as important as Constantine foreshadowed the Christianization of the whole empire. Deep down, this was the historical and theological dilemma with which the rabbis contended: as Rome converted from paganism to Christianity, should they consider the Christian Empire a new entity, or simply a mutation of the old? If the latter, faithful to their own contention that redemption would come once the “empire shall fall into heresy” (Mishnah, Sotah 9: 15), then salvation was around the corner.²⁰ Therefore, this item in the description of the eschatological scheme of the “End of Days” was rephrased by a contemporary sage: “Rabbi Isaac said: Until the whole Empire is converted to the heresy” (BT Sanhedrin, 97a). By this textual adaptation, not only was the estimated time of the End of Days postponed but, paradoxically, the Jews

¹⁸ More on the evolving persecutions and their scope in the different regions of the empire, see now T. D. Barnes, “The Great Persecution,” in eadem *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen, 2010), 112–50. For Constantine’s portrayal by the contemporary historian and the emperor’s panegyrist, the above-mentioned Eusebius of Caesarea, see A. Cameron and S. Hall, eds. and trans., *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford, 1999).

¹⁹ This in itself is quite puzzling. However, in light of T. D. Barnes’s recent contention (see n. 16 above), it is not entirely surprising (though on the other hand see now his contention (supra note 9) concerning the actual impact of the Constantinian era in the sphere of religion). Another view arguing that the rabbis simply ignored the transformation that took place in the empire has been put forward by M. Goodman, “Palestinian Rabbis and the Conversion of Constantine,” in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, Vol. 2, eds., P. Schaefer and C. Hezer (Tübingen, 2000), 1–9, and see further infra note 21.

²⁰ The Christian thinkers who basically accepted the biblical eschatological blueprint were faced with similar dilemmas. When Christianity arose under pagan Roman rule, they had to come to terms with the prospects of salvation under this rule, a matter most probably referred to by Paul in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, 2:7: “For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work, only until he that now restraineth be taken out of the way.” Cf. Tertullian’s explanation in his *De resurrectione mortuorum* 24. However, once Rome became Christian, the question became even knottier: were conditions ripe for the Second Coming of Christ?

joined with the Christians in seeking to hasten the transformation, though from opposing motives. After all, prominent Church fathers (such as the Caesarean Origen) also believed that salvation would come about only as a consequence of the spread of the Christian faith among all the nations of the world.²¹

The Christianization of the Empire presented Constantine with an extraordinary opportunity to harness the imperial system, which had already undergone some changes, in the service of a universal religion possessing a heritage, authority, and a well-established missionary and an institutional apparatus. In the eyes of the Jews, this radical change apparently symbolized the transition of Rome from a nation and a rule that, though it placed a heavy yoke on the Jews, nonetheless tolerated them as a nation, to one that was the utterly polar opposite to Judaism.²² The new situation also altered the dimensions and fundamental assumptions of contemporary Christian apologetics and polemics. For instance, the contemporary Bishop of Caesarea (in Palestine), Eusebius, went to great lengths, utilizing much theological ingenuity, to define the Church's attitude toward the Jewish nation.²³ The rabbis must have seen the hostile relations between Caesarea (the seat of the Roman governor and thus a symbol of Rome itself) and Jerusalem as

²¹ On the opposing views of historical destination and eschatological redemption in both camps as they evolved in the fourth and fifth centuries, see Irshai "Dating the Eschaton" (supra, note 11), 139–53. For a comprehensive survey of a limited aspect of contemporary Christian eschatological expectations, see W. Adler, "The Apocalyptic Survey of History Adapted by Christians: Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks," in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, eds. J. C. Vanderkam and W. Adler (Assen, 1996), 201–38.

²² It must be emphasized that recent studies have successfully attempted to demonstrate that the fourth century presents a watershed in the relations between Christianity and Judaism from without as well as toward the heretical sects (Arians, Neo-Arians, and others) from within. On this, see in short D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, 1999), 18. For a more cautious view postponing the actual rift between the Jews and Christians, in as much as that is reflected by the rabbinic world, see now A. Schremer, *Brothers Estranged: Hersey, Christianity and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (New York, 2010), 121–41. On the religious atmosphere in the post-Constantinian era, see Slazman (infra, note 51).

²³ This runs in many of Eusebius's works, though it is most apparent in his apologetic treatise *The Proof of the Gospel*, especially in books 2 and 3. On Eusebius's theological attitude toward Jews and Judaism, see J. Ulrich, *Euseb von Caesarea und die Juden: Studien zur Rolle der Juden in der Theologie des Eusebius von Caesarea* (Berlin, 1999), and see A. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius's Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford, 2006), 94–125. It is important, however, to stress that some of Eusebius's ethnic reasoning had its roots in the world of earlier Christian apologetic writings, on which see in detail in D. K. Buell, *Why this New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York, 2005).

beyond reconciliation. In an anonymous saying, they described both centers as though they could not endure under one roof: “That Caesarea is laid waste and Jerusalem flourishing, or that Jerusalem is laid waste and Caesarea flourishing, believe it” (BT Megillah, 6a).

A quick deliverance from the yoke of Christian Rome was, as we have seen from Rabbi Issac’s saying, an aspiration for the future. A similar sentiment was voiced by the renowned fourth-century Babylonian sage Rava, who adopted the terminology of the biblical laws concerning leprosy and applied them, metaphorically and suggestively, to the current state of affairs: “That is the meaning of the verse, He has turned all white” (Leviticus 13:13, BT Sanhedrin, 97a). Rava compared heresy to leprosy this way: just as when leprosy has completed its spread throughout the body, then—quite paradoxically—it is healed and is ready to be purified, so too when heresy (i.e. Christianity) has completed its takeover of the empire, then the time of redemption will finally come.

It was apparently no coincidence that this simile was used in another rabbinical tradition. Famous among the stories that sprouted up around the figure of Constantine, this one described the legendary circumstances of his conversion: while the Christians were being hounded to death and Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, had gone into exile, Constantine became severely afflicted with leprosy. His physicians and other savants having failed to find a cure for his illness, priests of the Capitoline temple in Rome proposed that he come to them and immerse his body in the blood of infants. Constantine, horrified by this notion, stopped his chariot on the way to the temple and addressed the masses, resolutely declaring that it was unfitting for a warrior such as himself to be healed by such means. He immediately commanded that the babies that had already been brought to the temple be returned to their mothers. That very night the patron saints of Rome, Peter and Paul, appeared to Constantine in his dream and promised him salvation and healing by means of the immersion (i.e. baptism) that the exiled Sylvester would conduct for him; and so it happened. Cured of leprosy, Constantine tied his destiny to that of the Church and promulgated decrees for its benefit.²⁴ The following Midrash seems to allude to the same story:

²⁴ This legend appeared in the *Actus beati Silverstri*, and though its earliest attested written form dates from the sixth century, most probably oral versions circulated as early as the latter part of the fourth century. On the early phase of the legend and its

For this reason it was said, when a person had on the skin of his body a swelling, a rash, of a discoloration, and it develops into a scaly infection on the skin of his body; (Leviticus 13:2). The text speaks of [four] kingdoms. A swelling is Babylon... a rash is the kingdom of Medes... a discoloration is the kingdom of Greece... a scaly infection is the kingdom of evil, Edom [Rome], that the Holy One Blessed Be He afflicts with leprosy, and likewise its prince [the emperor]. (Midrash Tanhuma, Tazri'a, 11)

Shortly after Constantine gained control over the whole empire in 324, he began to put into practice his plan to appropriate Palestine for the Christians. From that time on, relations between the Jews predominantly in the eastern segment of the empire and Christian New Rome / Constantinopolis and its Church became more strained, though we ought to bear in mind that the attitude of the imperial authorities towards the Jews changed only gradually.

II. GALILEE AND JUDEA: CENTER AND PERIPHERY

By the 320s, when Constantine began to implement his plan to make the "Holy Land" Christian, the Galilee was densely inhabited by the Jews who rejected the Gospel. Eusebius of Caesarea and his younger contemporaries, who served as the driving force behind the changes taking place in Palestine, were probably quite disappointed that they were, so to speak, "effectively expelled from the Galilee, the homeland of their Lord."²⁵ By the late third century, the Galilee had been well established as the "new Judaea," and its inhabitants began to form what seems to have been a regional Jewish identity. By weaving expressions concerning space and history into an extensive matrix, the Galilean Jewish inhabitants created their own local, mythic-historic past, importing many biblical narrative traditions from other parts of the land. Thus, they identified the spot where the Children of Israel

impact on Christian-polytheist relations, see G. Fowden, "The Last Days of Constantine: Oppositional Versions and Their Influence," *Journal of Roman Studies* 84 (1994): 146–70. On the Jewish angle of this tradition, see I. Yuval, "Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages: Shared Myths, Common Language. Donatio Constantini and Donatio Vepasiani," in *Demonizing the "Other": Anti-Semitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, ed., R. Wistrich, (Amsterdam, 1999), 88–107.

²⁵ See Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, IX, 8, on the important role of the Galilee in the initial dissemination of the Gospel. For more on Eusebius's complex attitude toward the Galilee, see P. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 1990), 133–70.

crossed the Jordan not near Jericho but in a place not far from the Lake Genesareth, and they transferred the tomb of Joshua from the region of Samaria to a location in the Lower Galilee. Through such shifts or re-locations of personages, tombs, and events, the Galilean Jews it would seem sought to challenge the new, unwelcome appropriators of the land.²⁶ Hence it is not surprising that those who molded the sacred traditions of Christianity transferred narratives connected with Jesus's Galilean life from the Galilee to the terrain of Judaea and Jerusalem and downplayed the importance of other Galilean sites. Nor is it surprising that in some Jewish polemics of the same period we find the Passion of Jesus set not in Jerusalem but in Tiberias,²⁷ or that in Jewish apocalyptic literature we are told that the early signs and initial activities of the coming messiah will also take place in the Galilee.²⁸ The Christians who successfully appropriated Judea and other areas still found it difficult through most of the Byzantine era to penetrate the region that had been the site of their Savior's initial success. Thus, again, it should not come to us as a surprise that Christians continued to be actively engaged in the idea of Christianizing the "Galilee of the Gentiles" and so we find in ninth-century hagiographical traditions Helen, Constantine's mother, portrayed as a builder of churches in that region, indeed as the historical founder of the new Christian Galilee.²⁹ Each side, in drawing a sort of demarcation line, essentially sought to claim that its own share of the land represented the whole—*pars pro toto*.

This kind of historical revisionism tells us much about the psychological framework in which Palestinian Jewish culture evolved between

²⁶ This phenomenon (which admittedly became full-fledged during the high Middle Ages) and the process by which it evolved has been demonstrated in a most fascinating manner by E. Reiner, "From Joshua to Jesus: The Transformation of a Biblical Story to a Local Myth—A Chapter in the Religious Life of the Galilean Jew," in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land—First to Fifteenth Centuries C.E.*, eds., A. Kofsky and G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem, 1998), 223–71. See more, Levinson (*supra*, note 7).

²⁷ This tradition is found in various versions of the "Toldoth Yeshu" (The Life of Jesus) that had circulated widely since its early formation, most probably during the later Talmudic period. See S. Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1902), 43–5, 146–7; and W. Horbury, "The Trial of Jesus in Jewish Tradition," in *The Trial of Jesus: Cambridge Studies in Honor of C. F. D. Moule*, ed., E. Bammel (London, 1970), 108–9.

²⁸ See our discussion and notes *infra*, pp. 128–32.

²⁹ M. Guidi, "Un bios di Constantino," *Rendicanti della Classe di Scienza morali, storiche e filologiche dell'Accademia dei Lincei* (Roma, 1907), 304–40; 637–62.

the fourth and seventh centuries. However, evolution did not occur in an environment dominated solely by the Christian-Jewish encounter. Rather, it bears the marks of a wider interaction with late Hellenic culture too. As Eric Meyers has shown, the elaborate mosaics discovered in Sepphoris—one showing Dionysus³⁰ and another depicting the pagan Nile festival—are significant signs of this interaction, although the houses in which these mosaics were found have not been identified as having belonged to Jews. Other evidence is even more definitive of cross-cultural influence between Hellenistic and Jewish culture. Archeologists have found the portrait of a siren tempting Odysseus in the house of a Jew named Leonitius who lived in Scythopolis (Bet She'an). And the representation of the sun god Helios mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, in the central panel of the Hamath Tiberias synagogue, demonstrates that such influences were not limited to the private sphere. The meaning and significance of these findings have been evaluated in several ways³¹ as evidence of an internalization of influences with various degrees of compromise, or as a sign of a diffused "culture."³² But in either case, Jews, like Christians of the time, were part of a wider Greco-Roman culture.

The Galilean cultural matrix was exceptional only in its intensity and duration. For there were similar encounters between Jews and other religious and ethnic groups elsewhere in Palestine in towns such as Lydda (Diospolis), as well as in the metropolis of Caesarea. In these centers the Jews were considerably outnumbered, though the surrounding areas were studded with small and medium-sized Jewish

³⁰ E. Meyers, "Jewish Culture in Graeco-Roman Palestine," in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed., D. Biale (New York, 2002), 169–74. On the unique place of Dionysus in late antique culture, see G. W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1990), 41–53. For a more detailed survey of the cultural conjunctions in Palestine, see eadem, "The Greek Moses: Confusion of Ethnic and Cultural Components in Late Roman and Early Byzantine Palestine," in *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine*, ed., H. Lapin (Bethesda, 1998), 31–48.

³¹ See, e.g., L. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence* (Seattle, 1998), 3–32, 96–179 (discussing the earlier rabbinic period too). More on the presence of paganism in Palestine during the late Roman period, see, N. Belayche, *Iudaea-Palestina: The Pagan Cults in Roman Palestine (Second to Fourth Century)* (Tübingen, 2001).

³² Y. Tsafrir and G. Forester, "From Scythopolis to Bysan: Changing Concepts of Urbanism," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, Vol. 2, eds., G. King and A. Cameron (Princeton, 1994), 102.

communities.³³ In Caesarea, the city with one of the most mixed populations in Palestine, Samaritans, pagans, Christians, and an ever-increasing number of Jews, the latter lived side by side in relations that fluctuated between reserved neighborliness and friction. The city's cosmopolitan character had been shaped by its position as an administrative and military center of Roman (and later Byzantine) rule and as an important international port.³⁴ It was in Caesarea that an almost unique social and religious fabric of life was woven among the different religions. Thus, in fourth-century Caesarea one could hear Jews—possibly immigrants from the Diaspora—reciting the *Shema* in Greek.³⁵ (This astonished the sages; nevertheless, they accepted it.) And there one might come upon a Jew who was a stagehand and maintenance man in the local theatre.

The Christian intellectual elite of Palestine had established itself in Caesarea, led by the Church father, preacher, and exegete Origen (d. ca. 253) and his successor Eusebius (d. 339), the most prominent bishop of his day. Rabbi Abbahu of Caesarea (d. ca. 300), who was acquainted with the Greek culture and language, provided his daughters with a Greek education, and was a constant visitor to the home of the Roman governor, was extremely well suited to serve as the main Jewish spokesman in the developing encounter between Judaism and Christianity. Like Origen, Abbahu understood that at the heart of the

³³ For an important survey of archeological findings in Byzantine Palestine, see S. Parker, "An Empire's New Holy Land: The Byzantine Period," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 62/3 (1999): 134–80 (with extensive bibliography).

³⁴ See L. Levine, *Caesarea Under Roman Rule* (Leiden, 1975). Since the publication of Levine's important monograph, much more of Caesarea's architectural structure and, with it, more of its unique cultural setup have been revealed, on which see the collection of studies, K. Holum, ed., *Caesarea Maritima—Retrospective after Two Millennia* (Leiden, 1996).

³⁵ PT *Sotah*, 7:1 (21b). S. Lieberman's classic studies concerning the knowledge and usage of Greek in rabbinic circles, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1942) and *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1950), have left an immense mark on scholarship. However, some of his basic premises and conclusions have been recently challenged by A. Wasserstein, begging for more caution in the examination of the sources and suggesting that the presence of a large number of Greek words in rabbinical traditions should be attributed to the apparent dependence of the rabbis on the Aramaic dialect in which many of the Greek loanwords had been absorbed earlier. See A. Wasserstein, "Non-Hellenized Jews in the Semi-Hellenized East," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 14 (1995): 111–37, esp. 119–30. For a recent effort to contextualize the PT within its Graeco-Roman setting, see now the set of three volumes edited by Peter Schäfer and in particular the studies assembled in the third, *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture III* (Tübingen, 2002).

conflict lay in what was also the most important element linking the two camps: the Bible. Abbahu declared to the *minim* (possibly Judeo-Christians or gentile Christians) of his city that their neighbors, the Jews, had the responsibility of studying the Bible in order to respond to their arguments—just as, a few decades earlier, Origen had advised a friend to study the Bible diligently so that he would be able to combat Jewish claims and interpretations.³⁶ Caesarea thus became an important outpost on the frontline of the Jewish-Christian encounter.

Although the importance of Caesarea in Roman Palestine cannot be exaggerated, the fourth century saw a minor diminution of its status when the province was subdivided into several smaller regions, each with its own administrative center. Nonetheless, Caesarea continued to have an influential status in Palestine, and it strove forcefully to preserve its primacy in Church administration against the rising power of the bishopric of Jerusalem, which in the course of first half of the fifth century was declared a Christian patriarchate.³⁷

Again, from the Jewish perspective, although Caesarea and Diospolis were outstanding centers of Torah study in their own right, the threads of spiritual creativity woven in them were drawn to and from the Galilee, where most of the religious literature—Talmud, Midrash, and apparently the wealth of early liturgical poetry too—took their shape. These works, most of which were compilations of earlier material (though some were indeed composed in this period) tell us very little about their authors, and only a careful reading between the lines teaches us something about the circumstances of their creation. Thus, without ignoring the important contribution of Caesarea and Diospolis, one can state that the Galilean intellectual elite was the driving force shaping Jewish culture in this period.³⁸

³⁶ BT *Avodah Zara*, 4a. compare Origen's *Epistle to Julius Africanus*, 5, and see also M. Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity* (Albany, 1996); and W. Horbury, "Jews and Christians on the Bible: Demarcation and Convergence," in his *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh, 1998), 200–25.

³⁷ E. Honigmann, "Juvenal of Jerusalem," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950): 212–16 (on the background leading to Juvenal's acclamation as the patriarch of Jerusalem). For an up-to-date survey of the struggle between the sees, see Z. Rubin, "The See of Caesarea in Conflict against Jerusalem from Nicea (325) to Chalcedon (451)," in Holum, ed., (supra, note 34), 559–74.

³⁸ On the nature of the rabbinic, elite circles in which these texts were produced, their size and place in society until ca. the end of the fourth century, see now, H. Lappin, "The Origins and Development of the Rabbinic Movement in the Land of Israel," in

III. THE SON OF DAVID AND THE SONS OF AARON: TRANSITION IN THE SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

An important ingredient in the social-cultural world of the Palestinian Jews was the hereditary office of the patriarch. Though perceived by Christians and, to a certain extent, by the Jews as something like a client king, the patriarch was a respected political figure with substantial communal functions and power, his authority having been finally ratified in fourth-century imperial legislation.³⁹ We possess reports that the patriarch was involved in administrative appointments made by the Roman authorities, and that he intervened in the affairs of the Diaspora communities. In fact it has been claimed that the patriarch wielded power in the Diaspora more than in Palestine.⁴⁰ For a while his political influence was so great that at least once, toward the end of the fourth century, a conflict between the patriarch named Gamaliel V and a senior Roman official led to the latter's execution.⁴¹

Indeed the patriarchs during the latter half of the fourth century served more and more as political figures, as is apparent from the wide-ranging correspondence between the patriarch Gamaliel V and the famous fourth-century Antiochean orator Libanius.⁴² At the same time, however, we already witness signs of decline in the status of the patriarchate.⁴³ While at the beginning of the third century, Rabbi Judah the Prince had been the uncontested leader of the laity as well as of the intellectual elite (the sages), during the late fourth century the Roman Christian emperor had to forbid displays of contempt towards the patriarch.⁴⁴ The third-century patriarchs are known to us by their names and their deeds (which were not always approved of by some of

The Cambridge History Of Judaism Vo. IV, ed., S. Katz (Cambridge, 2006), 206–29 esp. pp. 218–25; on the fate of the rabbinic circles in the later period, see our comment below, note 58.

³⁹ Theodosian code, 16:8:8, 16:8:11. Over the past decade or so, much has been written about this institution. There are varied views concerning its origins and period of consolidation; see, e.g., D. Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle* (Tübingen, 1994); and M. Jacobs, *Die Institution des jüdischen Patriarchen* (Tübingen, 1995).

⁴⁰ See S. Schwartz, "The Patriarchs and the Diaspora," *JJS* 50 (1999): 208–20.

⁴¹ Jerome, *Epistle* 57 (to Pammachius).

⁴² See M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, Vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1980), fragments 496–504, pp. 589–99.

⁴³ See L. Levine, "The Status of the Patriarch in the Third and Fourth Centuries: Sources and Methodology," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47 (1996): 1–32.

⁴⁴ On the origins of the patriarchate in the days of Judah I and his leadership, see now, S. Stern, "Rabbi and the Origins of the Patriarchate," *JJS* 54 (2003): 192–215.

the contemporary sages), but with those of the fourth century we are much less familiar. In fact, much of our information about them emanates from Christian sources that tend to denigrate them. It has also been suggested that the later patriarchs lacked the spiritual stature and the level of learning of their forerunners and gradually became alienated from the community, which they treated aloofly and haughtily.⁴⁵ As early as the beginning of the fourth century, matters had reached such a point that a prominent sage, Rabbi Jeremiah, sent a letter to the patriarch containing an especially insulting phrase: "To hate those who love you and to love those who hate you" (PT Megillah, 3:274a). Lurking in the background of this local contest of authority and prestige was yet another contest, between the head of the Babilonian Jewish center, the *Rosh Golah*, and the Palestinian patriarchate. As Isaiah Gafni argues,⁴⁶ in the second half of the third century the rising center of Judaism in the East was claiming superiority over the Land of Israel in more than one sense. The Babylonian community's antique roots and its long and stable history—only a small portion of which has been preserved in the records—became a source of deep cultural "local patriotism." And when its leadership, too claimed a Davidic pedigree, this thriving cultural and spiritual center asserted itself vigorously as an alternative to the one in Palestine.⁴⁷

However, the more immediate interests of the patriarchate, especially during the fourth and early fifth centuries, concerned the Jews and their Christian opponents. The patriarch did serve his people as a sort of perpetual symbol of Jewish "sovereignty," especially in the

On the prohibition to insult the patriarch, see, Theodosian Code, 16:8:11, and Levine, (*ibid.*), 2, n. 6.

⁴⁵ The status of the patriarch in imperial law is somewhat enigmatic. The Theodosian Code acknowledges the preeminence of the institution for the first time as late as the days of Theodosius the First (392 C.E.), though the patriarch is mentioned previously in an epistle of Julian the "Apostate" from the spring of 363, and from there in a somewhat strange manner in a set of laws and decrees stretching down to the year 415. Studied more closely, it seems that the gradual deterioration of the patriarch's status in the eyes of the imperial legislator came as a result of what was envisaged as his breach of the trust put in him and in light of his actions against the interests of the Christian empire. It would also seem that it came as, a result of the mounting pressure within clerical circles to annul this institution.

⁴⁶ I. Gafni, in D. Biale (*supra*, note 30), 223–65.

⁴⁷ For a detailed account of this most important transformation in late antique Jewish history, see I. Gafni, *Land, Center and Diaspora: Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity* (Sheffield, 1997), esp. 96–117.

Diaspora communities,⁴⁸ but this image, based on the notion that the patriarch was a descendant of the House of David, irritated Christians who could not tolerate other claimants to Christ's royal, messianic pedigree. A long stream of polemical statements defamed the image of the patriarchs and the patriarchal family, this wave of criticism gradually intensifying during the fourth century.

Thus, about the year 375, the zealous Church father Epiphanius of Salamis (in Cyprus), who had been raised in the vicinity of Eleutheropolis (Beth Govrin, in the southwestern area of Judea), recorded a testimony that he had heard some two decades earlier from a Jew named Joseph, a confidant of the Jewish Patriarch. Joseph, who subsequently converted to Christianity and became close with Emperor Constantine, was actually relating the story of his own life and the circumstances of his conversion, but he spun his tale around his intimate acquaintance with the patriarch. Among other things, he recounted the ailing patriarch's concealed conversion to Christianity, when he supposedly had secretly received the sign of Jesus (i.e., baptism) from the bishop of Tiberias. As if this were not enough, Joseph supplied Epiphanius with tales about the decadent lifestyle in the household of the patriarch, elaborating on the wretchedness of his sons "who acted like reckless good-for-nothings."⁴⁹ Epiphanius emphasized the patriarch's role in the leadership of the Jewish community (corroborated by other Christian and pagan writers), which only made more poignant his underlying message that those who accepted this tarnished leadership really deserved a new patron, the Church.

Although it is doubtful whether any of the Jews actively wanted to do away with the patriarchate, it is difficult to overlook the simultaneous eruption of criticism within the community—for there were some signs of communal disappointment with the later patriarchs—and the attack from without. Even given the meager historical value of the tales recounted by Epiphanius,⁵⁰ his "message" must have played some role in the battle of disinformation that was raging against the office of the patriarchate in an attempt to abolish the institution. The portrayal of the patriarch's sons as unworthy to inherit the office, and the attempt

⁴⁸ See Schwartz, (supra, note 40).

⁴⁹ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30, 4–12.

⁵⁰ For instance, the mention of a Bishop of Tiberias, when in all probability the earliest period one could imagine the presence of a Christian bishop in that predominantly Jewish town was by the mid-fifth century.

by some other Church fathers to disprove the family's genealogical claim to it,⁵¹ created a fitting backdrop to Joseph's libelous tale of the patriarch's alleged conversion.

From a strictly literary point of view, the episode narrated by Epiphanius saturated with symbolism, could have been envisaged as a cultural duel, between the "doomed" Jewish nation and the victorious Christian power.⁵² Against the "inheritance of the flesh" that passed from father to son in the patriarchal family, the Christians proposed an "inheritance of the spirit."⁵³ The patriarchs symbolized the leadership of the vanishing past, and the Church symbolized that of the felicitous present and future. On the face of it not everyone, however, shared these polemical sentiments, for they led to a conflict of interests between the Church and the imperial authorities, who desired to preserve the power and dignity of the patriarchate in order to monitor and control their relations with the Jewish community, hence the official endorsement of the office of the patriarch and the bestowment of honorific titles on the patriarch. However, I would like to speculate further concerning the strange and fluctuating imperial attitude towards the patriarchs. Is it possible to postulate here an imperial ulterior motive lurking behind the endowment of honors on the patriarch in the hope that the patriarch will in the long run convert, much in the same manner Roman aristocracy was lured into the Christian fold?⁵⁴ Be that as it may, official policy lagged behind the deep aspirations of the Church, though not by much. It would seem that the

⁵¹ See Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 350), *Catechetical Lectures*, 12, 17. Indeed, as in the case with the pagans, the bishops and Church Fathers served as the spearhead of the general campaign to marginalize the Jews and their institutions. They were those who tilted the rather balanced world of religious *Koine*, present in the empire for the most part of the fourth century, on which see recently, M. R. Salzman, "Religious *Koine* and Religious Dissent in the Fourth Century," in *A Companion to Roman Religion*, ed., J. Rüpke (Oxford, 2007), 109–25.

⁵² The Epiphaniian story has been interpreted in this way only recently in a fascinating study by E. Reiner, "Joseph the Comes of Tiberias and the Jewish-Christian Dialogue in Fourth-Century Galilee," in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed., I. Levine (Jerusalem, 2004), 355–86 (Hebrew).

⁵³ See, e.g., the new model of the monastic bishop advanced by the Cappadocian Church Fathers: A. Sterk, "On Basil, Moses and the Model Bishop: The Cappadocian Legacy of Leadership," *Church History* 67 (1998): 227–53.

⁵⁴ On the contemporary imperial and Christian attitudes towards the Roman aristocracy, see, M. Salzman, *The Making of Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 2002), 14–8. If indeed this was the case it reflected more than anything else the mounting pressure in this issue from Church circles.

mounting pressure of venomous Christian propaganda, coupled with what the authorities deemed unlawful and disloyal behavior on the part of Patriarch Gamaliel VI, led in the autumn of 415 to the stripping of his honor and the curbing of his power.⁵⁵ By 429, the Roman authorities were alluding to the patriarchate as a thing of the past and referring already to a new sort of collective provincial leadership.

Nothing is known of the composition and character of the new leadership. However, if we may judge from a later inscription, some vestige of the patriarchate was preserved, especially in matters relating to the ties between the community in Palestine and those in the Diaspora. Thus, the funerary inscription of the daughter of a sixth-century Jewish municipal leader in Venosa in southern Italy mentions the presence and eulogies of two emissaries and two sages ("Apostoles and Rebbites") from the land of Israel.⁵⁶ As in the days of the patriarchs, these emissaries may have been sent to collect contributions (despite the legal limitations imposed by the authorities on fundraising at the end of the fourth century), but it is fair to assume that their secondary if not primary objective was most probably to guide the Diaspora communities in rabbinic matters, in that the rabbis were continuing a well established and continuous tradition of links with the Diaspora, though our sources on these links and their exact nature along the centuries are rather meager.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Theodosian Code*, 16:8:22. It was not perchance that a few weeks following the promulgation of the imperial law an event of great cultural and political dimensions took place in Palestine, whereby in Kafar Gamla (not far from Lydda) an otherwise unknown priest by the name of Lucianus led by a nightly vision discovered the remains of St. Stephen, the Proto-Martyr in the estate of Gamaliel (the New Testament Pharisee, and a namesake if not an ancestor of the contemporary patriarch) who himself converted to Christianity. The relics of St. Stephen carried to different regions stirred up great excitement and agitation in the Christian world, resulting among other things in the forced conversion of the Minorcan Jews. On the discovery of the relics see, S. Vanderlinden, "Revelatio Sancti Stephani (BHL 7850-6)," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 4 (1946): 178-217. On the episode concerning the Minorcan Jews, see S. Bradbury, ed. and trans., *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (Oxford, 1996).

⁵⁶ See D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1993-95), 114-9. For more on the Jewish community of Venosa (southern Italy), see M. Williams, "The Jews of Early Byzantine Venusia: The Family of Faustinus," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50 (1990): 38-52, see also, Schwartz (supra, note 40), 221.

⁵⁷ This is to refute a recently voiced ill-founded view claiming that between the Jewish Palestinian center and the western Diaspora there was a great divide precipitated by a language barrier (Hebrew and Aramaic vs. Greek and Latin) leading to the lack of oral law (halakha) presence in the western Diaspora in sheer opposition to the

The demise of the patriarchate occurred around the time when Jewish literary activity in Palestine was in decline. The Jerusalem Talmud and the classical *Midrashei Aggadah* (a compendium of exegetical and homiletic material on the Bible that also incorporated other legendary and folkloristic tales) were being redacted. Indeed, substantial segments of the canon of Jewish lore were compiled at this time,⁵⁸ a development that most probably had ramifications leading among other things to a decline in the production and prestige of the Palestinian centers of learning. Thus, by the mid-fifth century, the historical role of the two leading elements of Jewish cultural and political life in late Roman Palestine seems in one case to have come to an end and in the other to dwindle. The latter conclusion might be slightly modified in light of the creation of some halakhic work, though in a changed format, like in the case of the compendia of rabbinical dicta such as the treatise known as *Sefer ha-Ma'asim* (The Book of Rulings).⁵⁹ This compilation, extensive sections of which have survived in the Cairo Genizah, reflected everyday life in Palestine during the sixth and seventh centuries. The texts in this compilation, which may have originated in the registers of the rabbinic court in Tiberias, is suffused with contemporary late Roman legal terms, words in Greek, as well as examples reflecting circumstances in the surrounding world of Byzantine Palestine.⁶⁰

strong and continuous ties between Palestine and Babylon. This view is put forward by A. Edrei and D. Mendels, "A Split Jewish Diaspora: Its Dramatic Consequences," *JSP* 16 (2007): 91–137 (Pt. 1) and *ibid.* 17 (2008), 163–87 (Pt. 2), particularly Pt. 1, 130–2, is quite untenable at least in regards to the claim that the western Diaspora was devoid of rabbinic halakha. A much more tenable, nuanced, and well-argued case for rabbinic presence in the Diaspora has been recently presented by J. L. Kurtzer in his Harvard dissertation, "What Shall the Alexandrians Do? Rabbinic Judaism and the Mediterranean Diaspora" (Cambridge, Harvard University, 2008), especially 234–318.

⁵⁸ See G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh, 1996).

⁵⁹ A critical edition of this most important register of halakhic rulings accompanied by a historical analysis has been recently edited and annotated by Hillel Newman (forthcoming), see further in his own contribution to the current volume, pp. 629–41. The decline in the rabbinic formation of Halakha during that period, indeed the shift in their attention to Aggada and lore, has been recently reiterated by M. D. Herr, "On Aggadic Midrashim: Formation, Editing, Survival," in Z. Weiss et al. (*supra*, note 1), 27–8 (Hebrew).

⁶⁰ The view expressed here concerning the shrinking in rabbinic power ultimately leading, in the present author's view, to the decline in the historical presence of the Jewish Palestinian center (see further below), is in contrast to an equally attractive model put forward quite recently by Seth Schwartz claiming, on the contrary, a

What we learn about the lives of women is especially fascinating; for example, “And it is forbidden for a woman to adorn her daughter and take her out to the marketplace because she is risking her life, and a woman who has perfumed herself and goes to [houses] of idol worship is to be flogged and her hair shaved off.”⁶¹ The rabbis’ objective, that is the preservation of female modesty, was compatible with the demands Church leaders made of the Christians.⁶² The rabbis were happy to adopt some of the ascetic practices of the surrounding society, because they were fearful of the social proximity between the groups. Indeed, questions that emerged in the wake of instances of conversion make up much of this collection of rabbinical rulings. It is indeed tempting at first sight to envisage the compilation of this practical compendium and the earlier redaction of the Talmud at least in cultural terms as being something of a rabbinical equivalent of the codification of the Byzantine imperial laws that was achieved during the fifth and sixth centuries, however, this correlation is pending further investigation.⁶³

If the above outline of late antique Jewish life in Palestine is right, during the course of the fifth century, the Jewish cultural elite faced a substantial transformation.⁶⁴ There are strong grounds to assume that

resurgence in Rabbinic power, indeed a rabbinization of Jewish society in the sixth century, see idem, “The Rabbinization in the Sixth Century,” in P. Schaefer (supra, note 35), 55–69. Ultimately, one has to admit that both views presented here base their conclusions on arguments from silence. Thus, in Schwartz’s view no doubt the so-called “compilation” the *Book of the Ma’asim* from the turn of the sixth century should be seen in a sense as a tip of a hidden iceberg of rabbinic exertion of their authority, while in our view in the absence of other corroborating signs of the “rabbinization” of the society during that very same period, the very same treatise reflects a new, inferior and transitional phase in rabbinical assertion of their power and somewhat wanting in its intellectual scope and presence.

⁶¹ J. Mann, “Book of the Palestinian Halachic Practice,” *Tarbiz* (1930): 12 (Hebrew).

⁶² On women’s lifestyle in that period and the ideals of domesticity and asceticism required of them, see G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford, 1993), esp. 94–118.

⁶³ See recently, C. Heszer, “Roman Law and Rabbinic Legal Composition,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, eds., C. Fonrobert and M. Jaffe (Cambridge, 2007), 144–63, esp. pp. 151–3, 159–60.

⁶⁴ With our emphasis here on the social and cultural world of the elite, we wish to point out the possible presence of a “common Judaism.” For a most recent attempt to bolster and refine this paradigm, see S. S. Miller, “Stepped Pools, Stone Vessels, and Other Identity Markers of Complex Common Judaism,” *JSJ* 41 (2010): 214–43. The postulated existence of a Judaism of the *commoners* only adds to the complex process of portraying the late antique Jewish social and cultural worlds. Moreover, its bearing on our current survey of the possible ties and conflicts with the surrounding cultures is rather difficult to assess.

the vacuum created by the decline of the patriarchal dynasty, and in more than one sense the rabbinical elite too, was being filled albeit in a social context by another element claiming aristocratic lineage, that is, the priestly caste. Although the priests' status had in many ways diminished since (and because of) the destruction of the Temple, they nonetheless represented the most significant era of the Jewish past, its cultic age, which every Jew prayed for its return. As early as the so-called Yavneh generation (ca. 100 C.E.) and for hundreds of years afterwards, the priests sought to maintain their special status and influential position, at times in conflict with sages who did not belong to the priestly circles. On the whole, though, it must be firmly stated that social tension between rabbis and priests was minimal, as rabbis and priests (who were also rabbis) did not belong to diametrically opposing social forces. However, priests seem to have been on a collision course with their homologous leaders, the patriarchs, as well as with the latter's equivalents, the Babylonian exilarchs.⁶⁵ When the Palestinian patriarchate no longer existed, a possible opportunity to reenter the public sphere presented itself, leading to their enhanced presence. Explicit references to this change in the Jewish social makeup have been preserved, surprisingly enough, mainly, but not exclusively in Christian sources. Time and again, fifth- and sixth-century Christian authors supply information about leading priests in Tiberias. Thus, we learn that a man named Pinhas (a priestly appellation) from that city participated in a Christian assembly that convened in Alexandria in 552, as an expert on the calendar.⁶⁶ Elsewhere we read that priests sent by the Jewish authorities in Tiberias were involved in agitating against the Christians by the Judaizing Himyarite Kingdom in southern Arabia (which will be discussed later in this chapter).⁶⁷ However, the most significant attestation comes from a series of anecdotes in

⁶⁵ On this phenomenon see O. Irshai, "The Priesthood in Jewish Society in Late Antiquity," in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed. L. Levine (Jerusalem, 2004), 67–106 (Hebrew); and S. Fradde, "Priests, Kings, and Patriarchs: Yerushalmi Sanhedrin in its Exegetical and Cultural Settings," in P. Schäfer (supra, note 35), 315–33. For a later textual cultural example, see, R. Boustani, *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of the Merkabah Mysticism* (Tübingen, 2005), 77–81.

⁶⁶ The anecdote originating from a Christian tradition is cited by S. Liberman, "Neglected Sources," *Tarbiz* 42 (1973): 54 (Hebrew).

⁶⁷ On this episode as reflected in the contemporary Christian sources, see I. Shahid, *The Martyrs of Narjan—New Documents* (Brussels, 1971), 11–117. For a more up-to-date historical survey on the principedom of Himyar, see W. Müller, under "Himyar"

an apologetic treatise composed in Carthage (ca. 634) by two Jewish converts to Christianity. The two, Jacob and Justin, who lived in Acre and Sycamina (near Haifa) and converted during the days of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, describe priests as leading communal figures in places like Tiberias and Acre.⁶⁸ It is very unlikely that such recent converts made faulty use of the term “priests” or were anachronistically reviving a concept from the biblical or post-biblical past, especially in light of their mention of other communal figures like Torah sages (*nomodidaskolos*).

What sort of social communal role did this priestly caste have? Was their asserted presence indeed perceived by the community as a symbolic substitution for the demised patriarchate? This is rather doubtful, and our sources do not provide a clear answer.

IV. PRIESTS, PREACHERS, AND SAGES: THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE HOUSE OF STUDY

Although the re-emergence of the priests was probably at least partially facilitated by the leadership void, it had to do also with the shift of the public center of gravity from the house of learning to the synagogue.⁶⁹ This view is not intended in any way to portray the resurgence of the social status of the priesthood as predicated on the decline of the rabbinical stratum. In this regard the rather schematic view of the social phenomenon as essentially presenting a zero-sum game should be avoided.⁷⁰ The priests stood at the core of the above transforma-

in the *Reallexicon Fur Antika und Christentum*, Vol. 15 (Bonn, 1991), col. 303–32. (German), more on this episode below, 60–1.

⁶⁸ The treatise was a polemical work addressed to their ex-brethren, the Jews. For a critical edition of this unique text, see G. Dagron and V. Deroche, eds., *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati, Travaux et Memoire II* (1991), 17–43 (historical introduction), 47–219 (Greek text and French translation), the anecdotes on the priests appear in *ibid.*, III, 12 (171–73); V, 6 (193).

⁶⁹ It has been claimed for instance that by the sixth and seventh centuries the synagogues assumed more and more the role of the alternative Temple, thus setting themselves in a more prominent social context, see S. Cohen, “Menstruents and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity,” in *Women’s History and Ancient History*, ed., S. Pomeroy (Chapel Hill, 1991), 285; and more recently in E. Reiner, “Destruction, Temple, and Sacred Place: On a Medieval Concept of Time and Place,” *Cathedra* 97 (2000): 47–64 (Hebrew).

⁷⁰ On the latter point I fully endorse R. Boustani’s point of view whereby he describes the later “non-rabbinic” so-called “esoteric” traditions of the mystic and magic genres

tion of Jewish communal life. The latter change should essentially be perceived as a conceptual rather than a physical relocation. With the disintegration of the traditional leadership, the synagogue remained the prominent communal focal point that could still serve the Jews as a focus of attraction as well as a target for external assault, predominantly in the Diaspora.⁷¹ In the course of the first half of the fifth century a set of three imperial laws promulgated between the years 415 and 438 prohibited the Jews from building or establishing new synagogues.⁷² But even then a short while later, around 442, in Constantinople, the imperial center of Christian rule, the Jewish community procured permission from the local governor to build a synagogue in the copper market, not far from Hagia Sophia. And though this building was short lived being a few years later confiscated by Pulcheria, the sister of Emperor Theodosius II, who dedicated the edifice to Mary, the instance demonstrates just how easily the laws on synagogue building were infringed.⁷³ The latter is to a great extent corroborated by recent

of later Jewish literature as presenting rather a hybrid emanating from various sources, Boustan (supra, note 65), 91–2.

⁷¹ Culminating in the famous Callinicum (east Syria) episode in 388 where an incited Christian mob set fire to the local synagogue. The incident became a public point of contention between the Emperor Theodosius I who demanded the instant re-building of the synagogue and Ambrose the bishop of Milan who vehemently opposed the emperor's demand. A later major incident involving the pillaging of synagogues took place in Alexandria in the year 414 C.E., in the early days of Cyril as the local episcopus. The latter incident was part of a wider set of religious riots involving not only the local Jews, see my forthcoming article, "Christian Historiographers' Reflections on Fifth-Century Alexandrian Jewish-Christian Violence." Minority (Jewish, pagan, Samaritan, and other) violence in face of Christian coercion and oppression is now at the center of the current discussion on ethnicity, community, and identity borderlines in Late Antiquity. Suffice it to mention three recent important studies on the topic: M. Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley, 2005); H. Drake, ed., *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (Aldershot, 2006); and the most recent book by T. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia, 2009).

⁷² On imperial restrictions and the significance of their ineffectiveness, see G. Stemberger, *Jews and Christians in the Holy Land* (Edinburgh, 2000), 121–60. For a description of a rather relaxed inter-religious atmosphere in Late Antique Palestine, see G. Bowersock, "Polytheism and Monotheism in Arabia and the Three Palestines," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 50 (1997): 1–10.

⁷³ Concerning the laws, see Theodosius Code, 16:8:22 (425 C.E.); 16:8:25 (423 C.E.); Theodosius II, Novella, 3 (438 C.E.). According to the legislation, existing synagogues were to remain intact and protected from Christian violence. On Pulcheria's action against the Jewish synagogue, see Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, A.D. 284–813*, ed. and trans. C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford, 1997), 159. More on this episode in A. Panayotov's article, "The

archeological findings from Palestine which have revealed that, at least in that region, especially in the area of the Galilee, the laws pertaining to synagogue construction were time and again defied.⁷⁴

In the flourishing synagogue culture, the priests played a prominent role, especially in the formulation of the liturgy. It is in this period that a list of “priestly courses” was drawn up which included the names of the various watches (divisions) that had served in rotation in the Temple, and their places of residence (mostly in the Galilee). Though the historicity of this document is greatly suspected, its importance lies in its overall powerful symbolic presence. The many liturgical poems (*piyyutim*) dealing with the list, the references to it in synagogue inscriptions in Palestine and the Diaspora (in Yemen), and the custom of publicly recalling every Sabbath in the synagogues the watches and their service reinforced the prestige of the contemporary priests’ lineage and antiquity. It is important to stress that the so-called “List of Priestly Watches” was an amalgamation at some point or another in Late Antique Palestine of various “lists” of varying nature all of which were very partially disseminated via rabbinic tradition.⁷⁵ Synagogue ritual and liturgy reflected increasing messianic themes in prayers that envisioned the approach of a new age in which the Temple would be rebuilt and its cult reinstated.⁷⁶ Maybe as part of that resurgence we also witness a revival of the saga of the priestly families of the

Synagogue in the Copper Market of Constantinople: A Note on the Christian Attitudes toward Jews in the Fifth Century,” *OCP* 68 (2002): 19–34.

⁷⁴ See R. Hachlili, ed., *Ancient Synagogues in Israel: Third–Seventh Century C.E.* (Oxford, 1989), 1–6, and more recently, J. Magnes, “Synagogue Typology and Earthquake Chronology at Khirbet Shema, Israel,” *Journal of Field Archeology* 24 (1997): 211–20.

⁷⁵ On the intricate history and symbolism denoted by the “list” see E. Reiner, “The Priestly Watches: A Late Antique Galilean Myth” (Hebrew, in preparation).

⁷⁶ The Hasmonean priests’ saga, especially their zealous and heroic struggle with the Greeks, resurfaces in the liturgical poetry of the sixth century, e.g., J. Yahalom, *Poetry and Society in Jewish Galilee of Late Antiquity* (Tel Aviv, 1999), 113–4. It is interesting to note that this phenomenon had its parallel in the Christian Maccabean martyr’s cult that evolved in Antioch during the second half of the fourth century, in part as a result of the strained relations between Christians and Jews in that city. See M. Vinson, “Gregory Nazianzen’s Homily 15 and the Genesis of the Christian Cult of the Maccabean Martyrs,” *Byzantion* 64 (1994): 166–92. As to the messianic tone in contemporary synagogue liturgy, see W. Horbury, “Suffering and Messianism in Yose ben Yose,” in *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament: Studies Presented to G. M. Styler*, eds., W. Horbury and B. McNeil (Cambridge, 1981), 143–82. More on this matter in D. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories of the Maccabean Martyrs* (New York, 2009), 29–77. For more on the messianic hopes in that era, see *infra* 59–64.

Hasmonaean period. The priests, who were historically the custodians of this cult, could lead this new synagogue liturgical rite alongside the congregants who no doubt shared these aspirations.

The dictum “a small city, that is a synagogue” (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 9:14) signifies precisely the social and cultural atmosphere of this period. Synagogue inscriptions that include the terms *kehillah* (community) and *kehillah* or *karta kadishah* (holy community or village) illustrate this statement as well as possibly signify the increasing “atomization” of the contemporary Jewish social communal cohesion.⁷⁷ In this new context, the influence of the communal leaders, the congregational leaders (*anchisynagogi*), the attendants (here called *hazanim*), and the priests increased greatly, whereas the status of the sages, traditionally connected with halakhic teachings and rulings, somewhat declined.⁷⁸ How did this transformation come about?

Earlier we described the decline of the regional centers of learning and national institutions, and the decentralization of Jewish cultural and public life that shifted the center of gravity from the cities (Tiberias, Sepphoris, Caesarea, and others) to the smaller towns and the rural areas.⁷⁹ The decentralization of communal life has registered,

⁷⁷ On the synagogue as a communal center in Late Antiquity, see Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 357–86. Generally speaking, epigraphical as well as rabbinical sources have demonstrated that the synagogues were products of local communal enterprises. A similar phenomenon can be detected in Christian communities, where churches were being founded by the local residents rather than by central government; see L. Di Segni, “The Involvement of Local, Municipal and Provincial Authorities in Urban Buildings in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Roman Archeology* 14 (1995): 317ff. The centrality of the synagogue, at least (and this is not entirely surprising) in the institutional and cultural dimensions of Diaspora Jewry, is reflected in the great interest the Church fathers took in it; see Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30:11.

⁷⁸ On the *archisynagogos*, see T. Rajak and D. Noy, “*Archisynagogoi*: Office, Title and Social Status in the Greco-Jewish Synagogue,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993): 75–93. It seems that the rabbis changed their public function and increasingly assumed the role of preachers (*darshanim*). On Late Antiquity rabbis as homilists and public rhetoricians, see the anecdote on Rabbi Samuel the son of Yossi son of Bun (late fourth century), PT Horayot, 3: 8 (48c).

⁷⁹ The centers of learning were mostly concentrated in the cities, see H. Lapin, “Rabbis and Cities in Later Roman Palestine: The Literary Evidence,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50 (1999): 187–207. Could a similar process have taken place within the cities themselves, whereby a communal cohesion led by a dominant center or component of the community simply disintegrated? On the fragmentation taking place in Jewish communal life, see S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society* (Princeton, 2001), 277–89. Be that as it may, recent archeological surveys, especially in the Galilee and the Golan, have tended to portray, though with different degrees of intensity, a picture of a substantial upsurge in synagogue as well as church building, the latter mainly in rural areas, see D. Bar, ‘*Fill the Earth*’: *Settlement in Palestine during the Late Roman*

however faintly, in one of the most central elements of congregational life: the yearly calendar. In some communities, the local calendar was at variance with the one issued in rabbinic circles.⁸⁰

Communal worship in Palestine (particularly in the Galilee and its periphery) inspired great intellectual and spiritual works—the *Piyyutim* (a term derived from the Greek word for poet, *poetes*) and the homilies. Whatever the origin of the genre of *piyyut*, or the historical circumstances surrounding its birth,⁸¹ these liturgical hymns were composed to accompany sections of the service and the order of reading the Pentateuch and the accompanying chapters from the prophets,⁸² contributing to the shaping of the nature and structure of the synagogue ritual for generations to come.

It has been claimed that among the *paytanim* (liturgical poets) along several generations were quite a few priests, such as Yose ben Yose (perhaps the earliest of them all, though his priestly credentials have been questioned), and later famous names like Simeon ha-Kohen be-Rabi Megas, Yonatan ha-Kohen, and Pinhas ha-Kohen son of Jacob from Kifra (a suburb of Tiberias), nearly all of them Galileans.⁸³

The return of the priests to the social-cultural arena might have also helped to revive an old, esoteric, but latent trend in Jewish thought, namely, the mystical speculations expressed in the *Hekhalot* literature.⁸⁴

and Byzantine Periods 135–640 C.E. (Jerusalem, 2008), 121–63 (predominantly on the massive Christianization of the rural areas). However, Doron Bar's description extrapolating from survey findings in order to determine demographic growth in somewhat absolute numbers is methodologically quite problematic, see now D. Mattingly, "Peopling Ancient Landscapes: Potential and Problems," in *Quantifying the Roman Economy: Methods and Problems*, eds., A. Bowman and A. Wilson (Oxford, 2009), 163–74. A more careful and nuanced picture of settlement and building in late antique Jewish Galilee has been offered by U. Leibner, "Settlement and Demography in Late Roman and Byzantine Eastern Galilee," in *Settlements and Demography in the Near East in Late Antiquity*, eds., A. Lewin and P. Pellegrini (Pisa, 2006), 105–30.

⁸⁰ This striking phenomenon seems to emerge from a set of dated funerary inscriptions found in the town of Zoar (south of the Dead Sea); see S. Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar Second Century B.C.E.–Tenth Century C.E.* (Oxford, 2001), 87–98, 146–54.

⁸¹ Varying and at times contradictory views have been voiced concerning this rather difficult problem; see Levine's summary in *The Ancient Synagogue*, 552–3.

⁸² On the latter custom, see the early attestations found in the Gospels, Luke 4, 16–20.

⁸³ J. Yahalom, (*supra*, note 75), 111–6. The significance of this phenomena has been questioned on several occasions by others, notably among them Shulamit Elitzur (mainly in public lectures and private communications).

⁸⁴ The *Hekhalot* (literally, "halls" or "palaces") literature is a set of mystical speculations and visions centering around the heavenly halls through which the mystic travels

A considerable portion of the liturgical poets' compositions centered around the Temple, lamenting its status as well as the fate of those, the priests, who officiated in it expressing profound yearning for the Temple's reconstruction and the priests' reinstitution. Thus, long compositions were devised on the high priest's rite in the Temple on Yom Kippur. Indeed, the poets' deep interest in this issue did not derive only from their need to remind the public of the prestige of the priesthood. Rather, it seems that they intended to arouse and express or maintain intense messianic expectations or increase apocalyptic speculation already existing among their contemporaries, most notably from the fifth century on. The accumulating impression of the above leads to the thought that within the transforming social make up of Jewish Late Antiquity the priests and the priesthood had assumed a special place.⁸⁵

in order to reach the divine throne. The term *hekhal* is based on the concept and modeled on the architecture of the halls in the earthly Jerusalem Temple. This and the *Merkavah* (literally, "chariot") literature—a complex of mystical speculations and visions about the divine chariot described in Ezekiel chap. 1—were most probably redacted and written during the period of the fifth to sixth centuries. This priestly mystical literature had strong echoes of the Dead Sea scrolls from nearly half a millennium earlier, on this see, R. Elior, "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines: Prayer and Sacred Song in the Hekhalot Literature and Its Relation to Temple Traditions," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4 (1997): 217–67. For a more nuanced view of the nature and origins of this literature see at length Boustán (supra, note 65).

⁸⁵ Since its recent inception the theory advocated here concerning the increase in the profile of the Jewish priests and priesthood in Late Antiquity has generated a very lively debate though quite polarized in nature. See my attempt to present a comprehensive survey of the historical dimensions and the supporting evidence for the phenomenon in, "The Priesthood in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity," in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem, 2004), 67–106 (Hebrew). More recently an effort to assess the imprints of priestly traditions in late antique literary sources, see P. Alexander, "What Happened to the Jewish Priesthood after 70?" in *A Wondering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne*, eds., Z. Rodgers et al. (Leiden, 2009), 5–33. Consequently the theory was received with varying degrees of acceptance among others by E. Reiner, (supra, note 75), Levine, *The Early Synagogue*, 528–9 (nuanced), and J. Magnes, "Heaven on Earth: Helios and the Zodiac Cycle in Ancient Palestinian Synagogues," *DOP* 59 (2007): 1–52. However, at the same time the paradigm also encountered mounting criticism again with varying degrees of disapproval, see M. Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia, 2006), 173; Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue: Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* (Jerusalem, 2005), 247–9. The most severe criticism was voiced by S. Fine, "Between Liturgy and Social History: Priestly Power in Late Antique Palestinian Synagogues," *JJS* 56 (2005): 1–9 and more recently by S. Miller, "Priests, Purities, and the Jews of Galilee," in *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee: A Region in Transition*, eds., J. Zangenberg, H. Attridge, and D. Martin (Tübingen, 2007), 375–402. In both latter cases, the theory concerning the priestly resurgence in Late Antiquity was misrepresented. Nowhere

Preoccupation with the oppressive subjugation of the Christian world and concern about the approaching redemption were not limited to a few individuals. The poets expressed the deepest, most existential aspirations of the entire community of worshipers. Moreover, the rise of Jewish liturgical poetry and the significant role of salvationist themes within it were paralleled in time, and perhaps even in content, by a similar process among Christians as of the second half of the fourth century. During the increasing millennial anxiety of the second half of the fifth century, Christians and Jews alike awaited the approaching redemption albeit with contradicting scenarios. There are vague signs that the anxiety within both camps might have also inspired mutual agitation, however, such a conclusion necessitates further study.⁸⁶

V. IN THE SYNAGOGUE: LITURGY, SERMONS, AND DECORATION

The period under discussion witnessed the flowering of the synagogues. Despite the imperial ban mentioned earlier, Jews continued to build and embellish their synagogues and make them centers of communal worship as well as of cultural activity. The synagogues were used as a communal arena where the community could advocate its collective spirit and at times restrain its members from forging too close links with the outside world. Thus, on the floor of the Ein Gedi synagogue (western shore of the Dead Sea), an Aramaic inscription cautioned the congregants against dissension and slanderous speech, and above all against the revelation of communal secrets to the gentiles.⁸⁷ Although synagogue premises were also used as houses of learning, they were, for the most, not a locus of this traditional func-

was it argued by me that the priests claimed power and authority, new social prominence, which indeed this resurgence was all about, does not a priori translate into a claim for spiritual and social domination.

⁸⁶ On millennial calculations in Christian circles at that period, see R. Landes, "Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography 100–800," in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, eds., W. Verbeke et al. (Leuven, 1988), 137–211. On a possible correlation between Jewish and Christian "end of days" calculations, see Irshai, (supra, note 11), 139–53. More concerning the Jewish messianic expectations during that period, see below, 59–64. On the rabbinic expressions of messianic hope, see further in P. Alexander, "The Rabbis and Messianism," in *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, eds., M. Bockmuehl and J. Carleton Paget (London, 2009), 227–44.

⁸⁷ See Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 362.

tion of the rabbinical class. Christian sources describing synagogue activity do not mention the rabbis, and no rabbi known to us from the literary corpus is mentioned in any of the numerous synagogue inscriptions.⁸⁸ On the contrary, some rabbis seem to have disapproved of synagogue practices, and others stated openly that they held the academy in higher regard. Thus, in the social and cultural matrix of Late Antiquity, the academy and the synagogue seem to have been distinct, serving different social strata.⁸⁹ The vast repertoire of synagogue inscriptions in the everyday languages of the people—Hebrew, Greek, and most frequently Aramaic—reflects a social world that is quite diverse and stratified, with great involvement of the prosperous and the influential. In one inscription we encounter Severianos Ephros, the highly praised *archisynagogos* of Tyre who settled in Sephoris. In another, among the worshipers at the famous synagogue at Sardis in Asia Minor, we find city councilors and procurators, alongside a priest and a rabbinic sage. Still other inscriptions disclose the trades and professions of members of the congregation—wood merchants in Gaza, *scholastikoi* (lawyers) in Sepphoris—and their financial means, revealed by their contributions to the synagogues.⁹⁰ As has been suggested, there is even evidence in inscriptions that women served as leaders of the synagogues. Scholars, however, are still debating whether they held true leadership functions or were merely wealthy

⁸⁸ This assessment is based on the strange phenomenon that none of the rabbis mentioned in the epigraphical findings can be identified by our rabbinic literary sources; see S. Cohen, "Epigraphical Rabbis," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 72 (1981–82): 1–17. On the latter issue see Miller (*infra*, note 108), 39–48.

⁸⁹ See Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 440–51. For a different view on the matters discussed here, at least in regard to Palestine, see C. Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen, 1997), 119–23, 214–25.

⁹⁰ Several collections and surveys of synagogue inscriptions have been carried out in recent decades. See J. Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic: The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues* (Jerusalem, 1978) (Hebrew) (mainly on the Palestinian synagogues); L. Roth-Gerson, *Jewish Inscriptions from the Synagogue in Eretz-Israel* (Jerusalem, 1987); W. Horbury and D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Greco-Roman Egypt* (Cambridge, 1992) (covering the entire corpus of inscriptions, but mainly relating to an earlier period than the one discussed here); and D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions from Western Europe*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1993–95). Synagogues are being discovered all the time and their ornamentation and inscriptions are being constantly reviewed, thus it is impossible to display here these new advances in our knowledge, but recent attempts to re-publish and reassess existing corpora do illustrate our view, see J. Kroll, "The Greek Inscriptions of the Sardis Synagogue," *HTR* 94 (2001): 1–55 (texts); 56–127 (illustrations and catalogue).

benefactors. It is also doubtful whether such women had any liturgical functions.

However, the growth of the synagogues may well have further weakened the social cohesion and solidarity between the different communities, especially those of the Babylonians, Alexandrians, Tyrians, and others who had emigrated to Palestine with a sense of common origin, established their own synagogues, and made little effort to integrate within the larger community.⁹¹ It is possible that rudeness and arrogance directed at these immigrants (for example, the harsh statements of the rabbis concerning the Babylonians) contributed to their alienation.⁹²

At the center of the synagogal life stood no doubt the liturgy. The fact that *piyyutim* (liturgical poetry) were accepted and integrated into the established liturgy with little opposition indicates that we are dealing with works suitable for all. These works were certainly complex, embracing various cultural tastes, but apparently they were also accessible to the general public's level of knowledge and understanding. However, this body of work, composed in a variety of languages (Hebrew for liturgical purposes, Aramaic for joyous occasions and eulogies, with touches of Greek), doubtless reflected to some extent the gap between the lofty style of the elite and the more common taste and proficiency of the populace.⁹³

The liturgical poets had important partners in the process of transforming the synagogue into a central institution of Jewish society in Palestine as well as in the Diaspora. These were the translators (from Hebrew to Aramaic) and the preachers. Both accompanied the three-

⁹¹ Although this phenomenon goes back to the decades preceding the destruction of the Second Temple, we encounter it later in, among other places, Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Lydda.

⁹² Rabbi Shimon son of Lakhish (late third century) once said to the Babylonian sage Rabbah bar Hannah that God hated them (the Babylonian Jews) for not returning to the Land of Israel as a whole during the days of Ezra (see BT *Yoma* 9b). In fact, the Babylonian Jews were blamed for the harsh fate of the entire nation (see Song of Songs Rabbah, 8: 9). In one case, immigrants in Sepphoris complained that the locals refrained from greeting them (PT *Sheviit*, 9: 5). On this phenomenon, see S. Lieberman, "'That is How It Was and That is How It Shall Be': The Jews of Eretz Israel and World Jewry During the Mishnaic and Talmudic Period," *Cathedra* 17 (1981): 3–10 (Hebrew).

⁹³ See Yahalom, *Poetry and Society*, (supra, note 76), 46–63. Another aspect of early *piyyut* concerns its possible links with the surrounding world of early Byzantine hymnography. A view advocating the plausibility of these links has been recently and forcefully put forward by O. Münz-Manor, "Reflections on the Nature of Jewish and Christian Poetry in Late Antiquity," *Pe'amim* 119 (2009): 131–72. (Hebrew)

year cycle of readings from the Torah. Translations into the Aramaic vernacular, first used already in services during the late Second Temple period (as is demonstrated in both the New Testament and rabbinic writings),⁹⁴ accompanied the public readings from the Torah, and provided explanations that incorporated not once midrashic material as well as popular lore and customs.⁹⁵ The targumic narrator mediated between the biblical text and its “consumers,” the congregants, who came from many social strata.

However, the full integration of the biblical text with the public celebration of the holidays (Sabbaths, festivals, days of atonement and mourning) was achieved by means of the public sermon. This custom, too, was an ancient one, going back to the Second Temple period.⁹⁶ At the end of the third century, there was an about-face in the sages’ attitude toward synagogue sermons and those who prepared and delivered them. It is difficult to know what caused this turnabout and whether or not it was connected to the decline in creativity in the academy. According to at least one tradition, the increasing prominence of the sermon was an outcome of the unique, social needs of the public as it experienced growing distress. Thus, for example, Rabbi Issac said: “Formerly, when a man possessed a *prutah* [low currency], he yearned to hear passages from the Mishnah and the Talmud, and now when he does not have a *prutah*, and especially when we are sick of [being oppressed by] the foreign government, a man longs to hear words from the Bible and the Aggadah.”⁹⁷ However, we must still distinguish between scholarly sermons and addresses whose place was in the House of Study⁹⁸ and the homilies that were delivered in

⁹⁴ See the anecdote in the Tosefta, Shabbat, 14: 2. The rabbis regarded the Targum as an oral form of the Bible; see PT, *Megillah*, 4: 1 (74a). On the links between the New Testament and the Targum, see B. Chilton, *Targumic Approaches to the Gospels: Essays in Mutual Definition of Judaism and Christianity* (Lanham, 1986).

⁹⁵ A. Shinan, “The Aramaic Targum as a Mirror of Galilean Jewry,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed., L. Levine (New York, 1992), 241–51, and more recently, idem, “The Late Midrashic, Paytanic, and Targumic Literature,” in S. Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. IV (Cambridge, 2006), 678–98, esp. pp. 691–5. The rabbis established the manner in which the *Meturgeman* (translator) was to carry out his task, seeking to prevent his act from overshadowing the scroll reading itself.

⁹⁶ Performed by Jesus, Luke 4: 20–21, and described by Philo, *Hypothetica*, 7, 13; see Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 145–7.

⁹⁷ Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, 12: 3.

⁹⁸ For the different views on this term and the reality reflected by it, see C. Hezser’s summary, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen, 1997), 195–214.

the synagogue in the presence of tanners, filigree makers, women, and infants, a distinction that has some bearing on the dissimilarity we have described earlier between the synagogue and the House of Study (*beit midrash*).⁹⁹ Scholars have concluded that, though many anecdotes are scattered through the Talmud and the aggadic literature concerning the delivery of sermons in public (that is, to the community), these sermons were in fact expounded to students in the houses of study.¹⁰⁰ They were learned and elitist in content and vocabulary, and were generally not understood by the multitude flocking to the houses of study.¹⁰¹ It stands to reason, however, that the sages fostered an exalted image of the lessons taught in the *beit midrash* while they disparaged the synagogue preachers for being able to attract a larger audience. The topics discussed in the synagogue sermons addressed immediate issues that weighed upon the community, and, as in the liturgical poems, the vocabulary was adapted to suit the hearers. When matters of Jewish law were part of the sermons, they were presented clearly so as not to mislead the listeners.¹⁰²

The sense of gratification drawn from the sermon and adherence to its message depended on the preacher's merits, the content of his address, and the manner in which it was delivered. Allegories, tales, expositions, and narratives done up in a wealth of rhetorical devices imbued the sermon with beauty and helped to draw the public's attention, to the point that the rabbis compared these sermons to the Roman theater or circus, praising the Jews who attended the former and avoided the latter.¹⁰³ These rhetorical devices did fall short of the perfected art within contemporary classical education, and it is doubtful whether even those aggadic scholars who were exposed to Greek

⁹⁹ See Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 449–51. The assertion at hand also concerns the physical layout; that is, are we dealing with different locations altogether or with different spaces under the same roof?

¹⁰⁰ J. Fraenkel, *Darkhe ha-Aggadah we-ha-Midrash*, Vol. 1, *Giv'ataim* (1991), 17–26 (Hebrew), and M. Hirshman, "The Preacher and His Public in Third-Century Palestine," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42 (1991): 108–14.

¹⁰¹ See PT *Baba Mezia*, 2:11 (8d).

¹⁰² The formula, consisting of a homiletic midrash coupled with a halakhic poem, is best seen in the Midrash *Tanhuma-Yelamdenu*, on which see G. Stemberger's survey in *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 302–6.

¹⁰³ See *Lamentations Rabbah*, Petichta, 17. In this context it is interesting to note the entirely opposite impression reported by the fifth-century Church historian Socrates Scholastikos, who described the conduct of the Alexandrian Jews of his day thus: "The Jews being disengaged from business on Sabbath, and spending their time not in hearing the Law, but in theatrical amusements" (*Church History*, 7, 13).

culture were familiar with prevalent rhetorical manuals compiled for instance by Menander of Laodicea or Quintilianus.¹⁰⁴ However, the public sermon served to bind together the community and was a tool of the first order for illustrating a point or persuasion. If we are to judge by the sarcastic comments of the Church Father Jerome, the preachers did their work well, since “they succeed through theatrical means in causing their listeners to believe in the fictions that they invent.”¹⁰⁵

The third and most prominent element in the public liturgical framework was the work of the artists who decorated the synagogues with wall paintings or mosaics. These decorative elements first appeared in synagogues during the mid-third (Dura Europos) and fourth centuries and enjoying rabbinical sanction, or at least their tacit approval stemming most probably from a growing acceptance of the importance of such ornamentations as a liturgical tool. Synagogue architecture also changed at this time, especially in the Galilee, where some of the later edifices (fifth to seventh centuries)—such as Beit Alpha and Sepphoris and others noted for their elaborate internal decorations—showed the influence of the Byzantine basilica style.¹⁰⁶ Forerunners of the embellished interior were also to be found in Diaspora communities, such as in the third-century synagogue in Dura Europos, on the Euphrates.

The decoration of the synagogue was intended to be a visual narration of the biblical stories and at times to represent the thoughts and allusions of the preachers. A comment by the Church Father Gregory of Nyssa (second half of the fourth century) can well be applied to synagogue floor mosaics. Referring to the Church of Theodore the Martyr, Gregory wrote: “The hues of the ornamentation in the church are veritably like a book that speaks, for painting even if silent knows how to

¹⁰⁴ On rabbinic acquaintance with Greek lore, see notes 31; 35 above. Concerning rabbinical acquaintance with rhetoric, some scholars have recently insinuated that this might have well been the case; see J. Yahalom’s interpretation of the *Akedah* (the sacrifice of Isaac) scene on the Sepphoris synagogue floor, *Et Ha’Daat* 3 (2000): 40–1. On the wider perspective, whether the rabbis internalized surrounding (Roman) values, see now the recent appraisal by S. Swartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton, 2010), 110–65.

¹⁰⁵ Commentary on Ezekiel 34:3. On the nature of the rabbinic public sermons and their rapport with the audience see again M. Hirshman, (*supra*, note 100).

¹⁰⁶ On the ongoing debate surrounding the architectural typology of Palestinian synagogues, see Levine, *Ancient Synagogues*, 296–302.

speak from the wall.”¹⁰⁷ The biblical scenes, the complex symbols, and their interrelationship required from the observer a considerable intellectual effort, and like the *piyyut* and the sermon, they were adapted to the taste and ability of the observer.

Indeed, a great deal of effort went into the decoration of the synagogues. The stunning mosaic floors offered an abundance of decorations and symbols, some of them clearly Jewish (candelabra, shovels for incense burning, the four species of plants used as cultic objects on the feast of Sukkot (to represent the harvest), and the ram’s horn representing the biblical scene (of the Binding of Isaac), and others distinctly non-Jewish in origin (the zodiac, Helios, and other representations). Scholars may differ on the nature and interpretation of this amalgamation of motifs, but be that as it may, the synagogue was a faithful reflection of the cultural world in which it stood. It is no wonder that, in a varying religious atmosphere and within a polyphonic like society, Jews did not hesitate to adopt, for instance, the symbol of Helios nor to turn towards it in prayer as we see in the fourth century *Sefer ha-Razim* (The Book of Mysteries, a treatise on magic).¹⁰⁸ This and other forms of magic literature emanated from what has been recently labeled as a “secondary elite” with some sort of role in the community.¹⁰⁹

The mosaic floor recently discovered at Sepphoris contains a wealth of biblical scenes and symbols, some unknown heretofore. Analysis of the individual panels and of the mosaic as a whole suggests that the unifying motif is God’s promise to Abraham (in the Binding of Issac) and the expected Redemption. This connection was made clear to those frequenting the synagogue by the depiction of the consecra-

¹⁰⁷ On this and other links between art and homiletic expression in early and late Byzantium, see H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1981), 9–21.

¹⁰⁸ The supplicant entreats “the adored Helios, the radiant leader” (*Sefer ha-Razim*, ed. M. Margalioth [Jerusalem, 1967], 99). For a recent appraisal of the place of Helios and the Zodiac in the Palestinian synagogues, see S. S. Miller, “‘Epigraphical Rabbis,’ Helios and Psalm 19: Were the Synagogues of Archaeology and the Synagogues of the Sages One and the Same?” *JQR* 94 (2004): 27–76. On magic among the Jews in Late Antiquity, see, e.g., J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incarnations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1985). On magic and its function in the ancient world, see, e.g., the celebrated monograph of F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. P. Franklin (Cambridge, 1997), and more in the following note.

¹⁰⁹ See now the careful and concise survey by M. Swartz, “Jewish Magic in Late Antiquity,” in Katz (supra, note 95), 699–720.

tion of Aaron the Priest and the daily sacrificial offerings, the latter symbolizing the continuity of the ritual even in a time when actual sacrifices could not be carried out. Many sermons and *piyyutim* were heard in this synagogue on these very topics. By integrating what was heard and what was seen, the expectation of Redemption was instilled in those who entered the synagogue to pray.¹¹⁰

Salvation was linked, no doubt, to another motif: that of undisguised hostility toward the Sons of Esau, that is, Edom, the Empire of Heresy (i.e., Christianity) that ruled over the Jews. In the world of the sages, the polemic with the Church was conducted on an intellectual plane in a cultured manner, but in the emotionally charged atmosphere of the synagogue the dispute became rancorous. The poets set the tone, filling their work with expressions toward the Christian Savior, as in the worlds of the *paytan* Yannai: “Those who praise the *kilai stro’a*” (“generous miser”; also a play on the Hebrew name for Jesus and the word for “salvation,” *yeshu’a*), and they demanded of God, “Uproot the Empire of Dumah” (*Piyyutey Yannai* 11; again a play on words: Dumah = Edom, and perhaps also an allusion to Roma = Rome).¹¹¹ A Byzantine melody called “On Earthquakes and Fires,” written by one Romanos, who lived during the sixth century in Constantinople, may have been a Christian reply to those aspirations. It mocked the ruins of the Temple of Solomon by contrasting them with the splendor of the Church of Hagia Sophia, which had also been damaged by Heaven with fire and earthquake, followed by local political upheaval known as the Nika (“victory”) revolt in 532 C.E., but had immediately been reconstructed.¹¹² Despite these insults, the synagogues, especially during the festivals, seem to have attracted not only Jews but also Christians with Judaizing tendencies. In the late fourth century, the Church Father John Chrysostom bitterly attacked members of his congregation who attended synagogue services on Sabbath and other festivals.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ See now Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue: Deciphering and Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* (Jerusalem, 2005), 225–60. For an attempt to portray the Palestinian synagogue mosaics strictly within a cultural Jewish setting, see S. Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Revised Edition) (Cambridge, 2010), 186–207.

¹¹¹ M. Zulai, ed., *Piyyutei Yaannai* (Berlin, 1939), 11.

¹¹² Romanus Melodus, “On Earthquakes and Fires,” 21; see R. J. Schork, trans. and ed., *Sacred Song: From Byzantine Pulpit to Romanus the Melodist* (Gainesville, 1995), 193.

¹¹³ John Chrysostom, *Against Judeaizing Christians*, 1.5, 8.4, 8.8; see also R. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (Berkeley,

The similarities between the Jewish and Christian cultures in Palestine extended even further. As the focal point of Jewish life shifted from the scholarly elitism of the academy to the public arena of the synagogue, we witness similar phenomena among the Christians, albeit in a different manner. Hesitantly, and despite the open hostility of the zealots, the Christians adorned their churches with handsome mosaic floors and frescoed walls.¹¹⁴ By the fourth century, the churches echoed orderly, well-executed liturgical ceremonies that were based on selected readings from Holy Scripture and accompanied by sermons. Christian liturgy attained a significant level of refinement and was shaped by the hallowed space in which the services were held, both inside the edifice and outside it (in nearby holy sites). The church authorities attempted to create a nexus and harmony between the two kinds of space and to make the worshipper-pilgrim feel as close as possible to the event being celebrated. Indeed, the Christian world was increasingly engaged in the sanctification of space,¹¹⁵ a concept made especially tangible in the Jerusalem liturgy that was developed in this period and was to influence decisively the liturgies of other Christian centers such as Antioch and Constantinople.¹¹⁶

While there was considerable innovation in ritual and ornamentation in the churches, when it came to the sermons the Christian preachers had recourse to the traditional world of classical rhetoric. Although they would never admit it, their writings demonstrate that they internalized the devices but avoided the pomposity, because public welfare required that the sermon suit the audience. The later sermons reflected more and more a less elevated style and a sense of increasing democratization in the spirit of Augustine's *sermo humi-*

1983), 73–9. On the Jewish community of Antioch in Late Antiquity, see B. Broton, “The Jews of Ancient Antioch,” in C. Kondoleon, ed., *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City* (Princeton, 2000), 29–37.

¹¹⁴ For a succinct and well-presented description of the transformation of art and its links with religion in Late Antiquity, see J. Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* (Oxford, 1998), 199–235.

¹¹⁵ See Caseau, “Sacred Landscape,” (supra, note 17), 38–45.

¹¹⁶ The earliest account of the institutionalized Jerusalem liturgy has been preserved in the late fourth-century diary written by the pilgrim Egeria; see J. Wilkinson, ed., *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, (Warminster, 1981). On the underlying concepts of that local liturgical scheme, see J. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago, 1987), 74–95.

lis.¹¹⁷ Already Origen, the famous third-century Church Father from Caesarea, saw the high priest's service in the Temple—slaughtering the sacrificial animal, flaying it, separating its organs, and sacrificing them—as a kind of paradigm of the task of the preacher, who stripped the text of its attire and divided it into its several meanings (from the plain and simple to the allegorical).¹¹⁸ If the preachers took care to follow this procedure, the worshippers who heard his sermon would be able to savor the scriptural texts. Fourth-century Church fathers such as Jerome and John Chrysostom repeatedly advised the preachers to take into account the narrow minds and shallow knowledge of their listeners, and to deliver their sermons calmly and logically, not loudly or hastily.¹¹⁹

The centrality of the rules of rhetoric to Christian public discourse was clearly expressed in pictorial art, both in choice of subject matter and in the location of works of art within the church space. In this place of public assembly, it was especially important to combine all the components of the discourse described above into a unified setting. Thus, in Christian society too the house of worship became the religious center of attention,¹²⁰ yet another component in the remarkable shift toward the democratization of public and religious life. Thus, John Chrysostom's public query: "Did you know of such a burning desire to hear sermons among our Christian contemporaries?" served as yet one more indication of the increasing involvement of the simple masses in shaping the spiritual environment.¹²¹ In church, Christian men and women absorbed the principles of their faith and fostered and refined their emotional world. But they were also exposed in sermons

¹¹⁷ E. Auerbach, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. R. Menkin (Princeton, 1965), 27–66; and G. Clark, *Augustine: The Confessions* (Cambridge, 1993), 70–3.

¹¹⁸ Origen, *Sermons on Leviticus*, 1:4.

¹¹⁹ See, e.g., Jerome, Epistle 52 (to Nepotianus). An unfriendly witness, the pagan historian Zosimos, noted how John Chrysostom managed to control the masses during his sermons; see his *History*, 5, 23, 4. For more on the Christian styles and methods of preaching with a wide array of examples, see M. Cunningham and P. Allen, eds., *Preachers and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics* (Leiden, 1998).

¹²⁰ On different aspects of Church architecture, art and liturgy as a center of spiritual guidance, as well as cultural and social cohesion in Byzantine society, see L. Safran, ed., *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium* (University Park, 2000); and see now, A. Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community* (Cambridge, 2009).

¹²¹ John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 5, 8.

and prayers to propaganda and vicious attacks on the enemies of the Church, among whom the Jews occupied a special place.

Thus, the Church and the Synagogue faced one another, each struggling to preserve its identity, each rejecting the other. From the early fourth century the Church had enjoyed the advantage of imperial sponsorship, and by the middle of the sixth century the authorities were intervening harshly in synagogue affairs. In 553 Emperor Justinian issued a decree that was intended to redirect the contents of study and ritual activity. Study of the Mishnah (or Oral Torah—*Deuterosis*) was forbidden, and readers of the Bible in Greek were specifically obliged to use the Septuagint or Aquila's translation. This was part of the emperor's campaign to bring the Jews "to the prophecies contained in [the Holy Books] through which they will announce the great God and the Savior of the human race, Jesus the Christ."¹²² If further proof were needed of the vitality of the synagogue and its centrality to Jewish culture in this period, this blunt attack on the institution would convince us. The monitoring of the synagogues is emblematic of the disintegration of the Jewish community, whose other traditional institutions and authority systems were, as we have seen, in decline. The end of the Palestinian hegemony approached while the Babylonian center arose that was to govern Jewish society for centuries to come.¹²³

The author of an early ninth-century pamphlet known as "The Epistle of Pirkoi ben Baboi" described from a Babylonian perspective the cultural and spiritual bankruptcy of the Palestinian Jewish community in the period under Christian rule:

Thus, said Mar Yehudai [one of the most important of the early *Geonim*] of blessed memory: religious persecution was decreed upon the Jews of the Land of Israel—that they should not recite the *Shema* and should not pray, because the... evil Edom [Rome, Byzantium] decreed, religious per-

¹²² Justinian, *Novellae*, no. 146, for a recent assessment of the Justinianic Novella claiming that essentially it was not referring to real-life Jews but rather to "hermeneutical Jews," see L. Rutgers, *Making Myths: Jews in Early Christian Identity Formation* (Leuven, 2009). On the overall and continuous policies of Church and state towards the Jews between the second and seventh century consult the survey by P. Fredriksen and O. Irshai, "Christian Anti-Judaism: Polemics and Policies," in Katz (ed.), (supra, note 95), 977–1034, and also N. de Lange, (infra, note 124), 407–9, 418–20.

¹²³ One of the signs of the diminishing authoritarian power of the Palestinian center was the cessation (during the second half of the fifth century) of the "life-line" of disciples traveling between Palestine and Babylon and transmitting to the latter the traditions and teachings of the Palestinian academies. See B. Levin, ed., *Iggeret Sherira Gaon* (Haifa, 1921), 61.

secution against the Land of Israel that they should not read the Torah, and they hid away all the Torah scrolls because they would burn them and when the Ishmaelites [Muslims] came they had no Torah scrolls and they had no scribes [to copy scrolls] who knew the pertinent laws for doing [this]... and up till now they carry on like this... But in Babylon Torah [study] has not ceased among Israel... and the Evil Empire [i.e. Rome] did not rule over Babylon... and two *yeshivot* have not forgotten the Oral Law nor the law to be practiced from ages ago until now.¹²⁴

Was Pirkoi referring, among other things, to Justinian's draconian law? We cannot know. However, if what he wrote had any basis in reality, it reflected a very grim picture of Torah study or the forms of halakhic decision making in Palestine, and more so of the faulty customs surrounding the liturgy and prayer in its synagogues, all of which touches upon our discussion earlier on in this chapter concerning the status and authority of the rabbis and the prevalent atmosphere in Palestine. Pirkoi's categorical assertions concerning the wretched spiritual condition of the Palestinian Jews were part of the long-standing rejection of the ancient center of Jewish culture in the Land of Israel by the proud Babylonian center. Pirkoi's readers were highly receptive to such remarks, which signified the transition from one cultural center to another and the passage into a new age in the history of the nation.¹²⁵

As recently described, everything that the Jews of Palestine wished for was already enjoyed by their brethren in Babylon: benevolent treatment, on the whole, by the Sassanian state; a recognized leadership, centralized and vigorous, in the form of the exilarchate; a diverse and creative world of Torah study; and relative economic security.¹²⁶ All they lacked was a unique status and prestige in the network of Jewish centers in the Diaspora. The Babylonian was the earliest of the

¹²⁴ L. Ginzberg, *Ginze Schechter: Genizah Studies in Memory of Dr. Solomon Schechter*, Vol. 2 (reprint New York, 1969), 552, 561–2. A survey on the status of the Jews in the Justinianic era and their contemporary culture has been recently published by N. de Lange, "Jews in the Age of Justinian," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed., M. Maas (Cambridge, 2005), 401–26. For more on the shift of the hegemony from Jewish Palestine to Babylonia, see the introduction to this volume.

¹²⁵ For more on the Babylonian portrayal of the history of the cultural history of the late antique Jews of the Land of Israel, see R. Brodi, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven, 1998), 113–7.

¹²⁶ See the recent informative and careful survey by I. Gafni, "The Political, Social, and Economic History of Babylonian Jewry, 224–638 C.E.," in Katz, ed., (supra, note 95), 792–820.

Diaspora centers and had long existed in a truly stable manner. But this did not suffice as long as the center in Palestine survived.

The Babylonian Jews' struggle to achieve political and cultural ascendancy constituted only one part of the Jewish cultural scene in this period. While the Babylonians were promoting their own interests and image, the influence of the Palestinian center was felt in several Mediterranean communities, though its extent and nature is unclear.

Thus, for instance, some indication on the links between the Palestinian center and Egypt may be indicated by a marriage contract from Antinopolis dated 417, in Aramaic and Greek (written in Hebrew letters and according to the Palestinian marriage ordinances), and by a report of a visit by a prominent (Greek-speaking) Palestinian sage, like R. Abahu (the turn of the third century) in Alexandria. The appearance of Hebrew on other papyri of this period is surprising, though it does not mean that a full-scale transition from the Greek language and culture in favor of Hebrew was underway. It is safer to postulate the existence of a lively cultural diversity among the Egyptian communities.¹²⁷

The Christian onslaught on the pagans (toward the end of the fourth century) left the Jews as the viable and strong oppositional minority in Alexandria. The tension between Jews and Christians reached its peak during the riots of 414–15, in the course of which the synagogues were pillaged and the Jews (or at least some of them) were reported to have been exiled from the city, a move that was followed by a wave of conversions.¹²⁸ The ongoing animosity led to the compilation of a set of treatises, *Contra Judaeos*, formatted as dialogues between representatives of the two faiths. Although it is quite plausible to assume that the extent dialogues do not represent “face-to-face” confrontations, they do on the whole reflect contemporary notions and anxieties in both camps. Notwithstanding the tense atmosphere in Alexandria, in general the Jews of Egypt maintained social and cultural contacts with their surroundings.¹²⁹ Indeed, such inter-religious and communal relations, together with the links with the Palestinian center, determined

¹²⁷ On a recent novel theory claiming the presence of a rift between the Palestinian rabbinic center and the Diaspora to the west of Roman Palestine, see *supra*, note 57.

¹²⁸ On this episode see *supra*, note 71.

¹²⁹ For a more detailed account of the Jewish Alexandrian community of Late Antiquity, see C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, 1997), 119–27 (with extensive bibliography).

the culture of most of the Jewish communities of the Mediterranean basin.

The extent to which the Palestinian center influenced the Italian Jews is unknown, though evocative funerary and synagogue inscriptions have been found in several locations. Few and scattered though they are, apart from attesting to the strict observation of the Jewish calendar and the occasional visit of *apostoloi* (emissaries from Palestine), these inscriptions “tend to confirm the importance of the study of the Law, the gradual revival of Hebrew, and the coming into currency of the term ‘rabbi’.”¹³⁰ Yet the Jews of Rome, like those of Alexandria, exhibit a clear pattern of interaction with non-Jews. In the remains of artifacts and catacombs from third-to fifth-century Rome, we see ornamentation and iconography that display a shared workshop identity with the local pagan and Christian cultures as well as distinct, unmistakable expressions of Jewish identity. Indeed, the *Collatio Legum Moisaicarum et Romanarum*, a systematic comparison of Mosaic and Roman Law probably produced by a Roman Jew toward the end of the fourth century, has the same characteristics. Its author intended it “to stress the great age of the Mosaic Law and emphasize its essential conformity to the legal system of other, non-Jewish peoples.”¹³¹

VI. AN AGE OF TRANSITION: EMPIRES IN CONFLICT

In the year when the King-Messiah is revealed, all the kings of the nations of the world will challenge each other. (Pesikta Rabbati, Qumi Ori, 36)

Although the splendor of the Land of Israel had faded somewhat for the Jews, the gentiles now turned their attention to it. The turn of the sixth century and the early decades of the seventh proved to be a very

¹³⁰ See supra 36 and more in the careful survey of the evidence (which includes inscriptions from Spain and Asia Minor) by F. Millar, “The Jews of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora between Paganism and Christianity, A.D. 312–438,” in *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*, eds., J. Lieu et al., (London, 1992), 97–123, esp. pp. 110–1.

¹³¹ On these issues, see the comprehensive study of L. Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora* (Leiden, 1995). For a suggestive thought lightly speculative case for a viable Torah center in late antique Rome, see recently T. Ilan “The Torah of the Jews of Ancient Rome,” *JSQ* 16 (2009): 363–95. For the rather complex picture of Jewish presence and culture in late antique North Africa, see now K. B. Stern, *Inscribing Devotion and Death: Archaeological Evidence for Jewish Populations of North Africa* (Leiden, 2008), especially 51–97.

stormy period for the Jews of Palestine, an age imbued with apocalyptic expectations, when ruling empires' fate changed and the peoples heard tidings of redemption.

Indeed the political tension within the Byzantine orbit began to show already earlier on.¹³² Did the Jews take advantage of this early sixth-century volatile situation? According to contemporary sources they seem to have been quite proactive. Thus, for instance, in the town of Tella on the Sassanian front they attempted to assist the Persians by digging a tunnel under the local synagogue which was attached to the town's wall. Following the discovery of the plot the authorities slaughtered the entire local Jewish population.¹³³ Approximately two decades later in another part of the Empire, in the land of the Himyarites in the southern Arabian peninsula, they got themselves involved in or perhaps (as some Christian sources would have us believe) indeed initiated from Palestine a political-religious conflict, and later on (ca. the mid sixth century) in Palestine itself they seem to have taken part in Samaritan bloody skirmishes with the Byzantine authorities. Were these actions merely the attempts of an oppressed people to avenge itself against the ruling power, or was there more to it? Let us look more closely at the events in Himyar.

Although the focus of the conflict was Himyar, its reverberations were felt far away, in the capitals of Persia and Byzantium. At the time, in the 520s, the influence of the Jewish presence around the southern shores of the Red Sea and along its important trade routes was felt—according to Christian sources—in the conversion to Judaism of the Himyarite king, Joseph Dhu Nuwas. Contemporary documents ascribe to emissaries of the priests of Tiberias a significant role in the affair. Were it not for the important location of Himyar, on the southern shores of the Red Sea very near the trade routes to the kingdom of Axum (Abyssinia, which had only recently been Christianized), and if Dhu Nawas had not begun to persecute the Christian communities in his kingdom and in the area to the north, in the city of Najran, it is doubtful whether this episode would have attracted so much attention. One Christian author even claimed that Joseph's pretext in instigating this persecution against the local Christians was to alleviate the

¹³² Thus for instance troubles on the Mesopotamian front began with a Sassanian attack on the Romans which lasted for four years (502–506 C.E.).

¹³³ So according to the Christian chronicler Joshua the Stylite, 47.

empire's pressure on its Jews. But the conflict in Hymar ended with the defeat of King Joseph by a unified Byzantine camp consisting of the joint forces of Justin I and the Auxumite King.¹³⁴

According to a later, most probably legendary tale, at this very time a sage from Babylon named Mar Zutra was appointed head of the local academy in Palestine. This Mar Zutra was the only son of the exilarch, also named Mar Zutra, who had been executed by the Persians toward the end of the fifth century, after an uprising that reached its climax with the creation of an autonomous Jewish territory.¹³⁵ Did the appearance of a new scion of the House of David in Palestine infuse the events in Babylon and Himyar with messianic overtones? Did the Jews of Palestine seek to restore past glory by replanting an offshoot of the stock of Jesse in their midst? This indeed seems very doubtful, though on the other hand we should not underestimate the cultural climate in the synagogues of Palestine, the atmosphere of mounting enmity toward Rome and Christianity. Political unrest and other signs of the empire's coming collapse fanned messianic hopes among the Jews. These lines by Yannai, a poet whom we have already encountered, are a sample of the vigor with which this "public campaign" was conducted:

May it be reported of Edom [Rome] as it was reported of Egypt
 The vision of Dumah like the vision of Egypt
 Receiving retribution from Pathros [Upper Egypt], at the end of a tenth
 plague
 And a tenth horn shall utterly settle accounts with Edom.¹³⁶

Apocalyptic expectations, which would later emerge in a form of "End of Days" literature were thus to color much of the Jewish culture of this region until the Arab conquest in the seventh century.

The death of Emperor Justinian in 565 foretold the approaching end of Byzantine rule in Palestine. The ticking of the apocalyptic clock became much louder. Growing tensions between the Sassanian

¹³⁴ On the Byzantine campaign, see A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First* (Cambridge, 1950), 274–302, and I. Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najran* (Brussels, 1971). For a comprehensive treatment of this episode (in the course of which the Himyarites clashed also with the Ethiopian kingdom) see recently, I. Gajda, *Le royaume de Himyar à l'époque monothéiste* (Paris, 2009), 87–109.

¹³⁵ A. Neubaur, ed., *Seder Olam Zutah: Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, II (Oxford, 1895), 72–3, 76. On the background of this tradition and its possible messianic connotations, see Irshai, "Dating the Eschaton," 152–3.

¹³⁶ *Piyyutei Yannai*, Zulai, ed. (supra note, 110), 90.

kingdom and Byzantium gave new meaning to the rabbinic saying that Rome would be brought down by the hands of the Persians, because it was the Persians who initiated the building of the Second Temple, which the Romans had destroyed.¹³⁷ This ancient belief was to be realized in the early decades of the seventh century.

Messianic fervor intensifies in times of political, social, and religious instability, of which violence is an important ingredient. One of the characteristics of this age was increasing violence, in which the Jews had a share. Jewish people enjoyed going to the theater and to gladiatorial fights, circuses, and chariot races, activities that were criticized by both the rabbis and the Church fathers. The races inspired riotous factional rivalries between the charioteers' ardent partisans, *iuvenes* (youngsters) with "Hunnic" hairstyles, beards, mustaches, and special garments. This tumultuous atmosphere did not deter the Jews. In Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, they not only attended the spectacles but on many occasions also joined the melee. The riots had religious and political overtones, and more than once they resulted in the looting and the burning down of a synagogue or the destruction of a church.¹³⁸ At the turn of the sixth century, factional rivalry was an important factor in the strife that swept the East and contributed to the downfall of two successive Byzantine emperors, Maurice and Phocas, and to the accession of a third, Heraclius. We may plausibly tie some of this spell of violence to the growing apocalyptic fervor among Jews and Christians.

A converted Jew named Jacob attested to these hopes. While describing an encounter in Acre that he witnessed in his youth during the reign of Emperor Maurice (582–602), Jacob told of "a priest from Tiberias" who had a vision that the Messiah, King of Israel, would come at the end of eight years.¹³⁹ If the Tiberian indeed saw this vision toward the end of Maurice's reign, its "fulfillment" would have begun in 611 with the conquest of Antioch by the Sassanian army. We may

¹³⁷ BT Yoma 10a. On the increasing messianic tension among the Jews during the sixth century, see N. de Lange, "Jewish and Christian Messianic Hopes in Pre-Islamic Byzantium," in M. Bockmuehl and J. Carleton Pajet, eds. (supra, note 86), 274–84.

¹³⁸ See A. Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976), 74–80, 149–52, 271–96.

¹³⁹ *Doctorina Jacobi* (supra, note 68), 5, 6, p. 193. Jacob reports at least two other similar episodes. Compare the apocalyptic visions reported by the contemporary Byzantine historian Theophylact Simocatta, in M. and M. Whitby, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta* (Oxford, 1986), 222–25.

assume from this story that messianic fervor had not waned among the Galilean Jews, who played an important role during the Persian invasion of Palestine. According to Christian sources, the Jews joined forces with the Persians who invaded the country through eastern Galilee. The line of advance passed through lower Galilee to Caesarea and from there to Jerusalem, where the Persians slaughtered many Christians, possibly with the Jews' help. The taking of Jerusalem, the crowning achievement of the campaign, was viewed by the Jews in salvationist terms. The many apocalyptic treatises compiled at this time reflected, no doubt, contemporary anxieties and widely held expectations.¹⁴⁰ This literature had much to do with the writings known as the *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah*, which describe mystical journeys to the heavenly palaces and give esoteric explanations of the divine chariot in the biblical Book of Ezekiel, and which some scholars maintain was contemporaneous.¹⁴¹ The author of the apocalyptic Book of Zerubbabel wrote: "All the children of Israel will see the Lord like a man of war with a helmet of salvation on His head. . . . He will do battle against the forces of Armilus [an epithet for the king of Rome, the Antichrist] and they will all fall dead in the Valley of Arbel."¹⁴² Here again we see the array of mythic traditions that the Galileans had formed about their region.

The reconquest of Palestine by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in 630, a conquest that had messianic connotations for the Christians

¹⁴⁰ Apart from the Book of Zerubbabel, we have the Book of Elijah and few other smaller treatises; see Y. Even-Shmuel, *Midrashei Geulah* (Jerusalem, 1954), 15–64 (Hebrew). *Sefer Zerubbabel* received a translation and commentary by M. Himmelfarb in Stern and Mirsky, eds., *Rabbinic Fantasies*, 67–90. See now also the excellent annotated collection of Jewish apocalyptic treatises by J. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Post-Rabbinic Jewish Apocalyptic Reader* (Atlanta, 2005). As for the realities on the ground which for instance in Jerusalem were less dramatic than reflected in contemporary Christian sources, see now G. Avni, "The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem (614 C. E.)—An Archaeological Assessment," *BASOR* 357 (2010): 35–48 (with extensive bibliography). It is important to note that earlier signs of Jewish-Sassanian collaboration against the Christian overlords had occurred in Southern Arabia already during the second half of the sixth century; see C. Robin, *L'Arabie antique de Karib'il a Mahomet* (Aix-en-Provence, 1993), 144–50.

¹⁴¹ See, e.g., J. Halperin, *The Merkubah in Rabbinic Literature* (Leiden, 1980); and P. Schaefer, *The Hidden and Manifested God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Albany, 1992); more on the messianic and eschatological world in this literature see now, P. Alexander, (supra, note 86), 232–4.

¹⁴² Himmelfarb, *Sefer Zerubbabel*, 78. The place of the Land of Israel in general and the Galilee in particular in the "end of days" scenarios is still in need of close scrutiny.

(restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem from its Persian captivity, and a campaign of persecution against the Jews), intensified the Jews' sense of the approach of the End of Days. And when the Muslims appeared in Palestine four years later, a liturgical poet recalled the apocalyptic vision of Zerubbabel:

The kings from the land of] Edom will be no more
 And the people of Antioch will rebel and make peace
 And Ma'aziya [Tiberias] and Samaria will be consoled
 And Acre and the Galilee will be shown mercy
 Edomites and Ishmael will fight in the Valley of Acre.¹⁴³

The Arab conquest, which at first was deemed by the Jews to be a stage in the divinely determined redemption, soon appeared to be yet another yoke.¹⁴⁴ In these dismaying circumstances, the words of this anonymous poet may have been of some comfort: "The Messiah will emerge in dignity like the sun rising in night." In this light, when a worshiper entered a synagogue and encountered the seemingly pagan image of *Sol Invictus* (the Victorious Sun), exemplifying the figure of the Redeemer, it must have served as the ultimate consolation and promise of the victory of the Jews over their opponents.

¹⁴³ The text (in my own translation) is taken from the poem "In Those Days and In That Time"; see Even-Shmuel, *Midrashei Geula*, (Jerusalem, 1954), 114 (Hebrew).

¹⁴⁴ On the change of sentiment among the Jews, see J. Yahalom, "The Transition of Kingdoms in Eretz Israel as Conceived by Poets and Homelists" in *Shalem: Studies in the History of the Jews in Eretz Israel 6* (Jerusalem, 1992), 1–22 (Hebrew). It ought to be noted that the Arab conquest of the East posed a grave problem to the Christian concept of history as well, resulting in new waves of apocalyptic anxiety. For an overview of the Byzantine tick and chime of the eschatological clock, see P. Magdalino, "The History of the Future and Its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda," in *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol on his Seventieth Birthday*, eds., R. Beaton and C. Rouche (Aldershot, 1993), 3–34. One of the earliest and most influential attempts to address the historical transformation in apocalyptic terms was that known as the *Ps.-Methodius*, which was written in northern Syria circa 692 C.E. See G. Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, Vol. 1: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, eds., A. Cameron and L. Conrad (Princeton, 1992), 149–87. More on the conflicting visions of the "end" during the steering times of the seventh century, see G. Stroumsa, "False Prophet, False Messiah and the Religious Scene in Seventh-Century Jerusalem," in Bockmuehl and Carleton Paget (supra, note 86), 285–96.

CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY (641-1204)

Robert Bonfil

Among the concepts of crucial importance for the historians' business, those of continuity and discontinuity (or change) appear to have constantly retained the greatest attention. Although "in a sense this is what all historians study all the time," one can hardly say that historians really do refer to this pair of apparently opposite concepts in the same way.¹ Since historical narratives are inevitably shaped by historians' different outlooks, we can reasonably expect that things will not be different for Byzantine history as a whole and for the history of Byzantine Jews in particular. One cannot escape the constraint of dealing with such complexity in approaching the topic, even though, at least at first glance, questions related to continuity and change may have been of greater relevance for Western European than for Byzantine history, especially the transition from Late Antiquity toward the early Middle Ages.

In a seminal essay published almost twenty-five years ago,² Anthony Cutler and Alexander Kazhdan endeavored to set the stage by arguing against Günter Weiss's article on the continuity of the social structure of Byzantium³ which according to them opened a new phase in the development of Byzantine studies.⁴ The keyword in the above sentence is *structure*. Was there a structural change? That is to say: having assumed axiomatically that over a sufficiently large span of time

¹ P. Burke, "Introduction," in Idem (Ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History xiii: Companion Volume* (Cambridge, 1979), 1.

² A. Cutler and A. Kazhdan, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Byzantine History," *Byzantion* 52 (1982): 429-78.

³ G. Weiss, "Antike und Byzanz. Die Kontinuität des Gesellschaftsstruktur," *Historische Zeitschrift* 224 (1977): 529-60.

⁴ Cutler and Kazhdan, art. cit. p. 430: "Weiss was the first in western historiography to undertake the task of proving the thesis of the continuity of the social structure in the transition from Antiquity to the Byzantine Middle Ages." By means of the qualifying phrase 'in western historiography' in the above sentence, they suggested an association between Weiss's perspective and the works of the Russian scholar M. Ja. Sjusjumov who "developed, in a crisp and consistent way, the concept of Byzantine continuity" before Weiss (ibidem; the reference is to: M. Ja. Sjusjumov, "Nekotorye problemy istoričeskogo razvitija Vizantii i Zapada," *VizVrem* 35 (1973): 3-18).

alterations within certain aspects of life are unavoidable, the question would be whether the transition from Antiquity to Byzantium entailed qualitative structural changes or just superficial alterations in particular aspects of life. In order to answer this question, one should compare the structure of Antiquity with the medieval one of Byzantium. According to Cutler and Kazhdan, "in all probability, the most appropriate definition" of the structure of Antiquity "would understand it as an urban social structure, that is based on the polis or municipium, in which structure the existence of the city as the prime social unit determined both the forms of ownership, the relationship of social groups or classes, the nature of the microstructures (microgroups) and the ideological, socio-psychological, religious and esthetic self-consciousness of society." An articulated scrutiny of the major manifestations concerning the above-mentioned elements would unequivocally show discontinuity in the transition from Antiquity to medieval Byzantium. And yet, in their own words, the substantial difference between their approach and that of Weiss and others who would rather maintain that the idea of continuity "consists in the fact that from his point of view the alterations in social life with which he is concerned were insignificant and incidental, that they were realized slowly during the long span both of Roman and Byzantine history," whereas for Cutler and Kazhdan "[the alterations] seem to be united by a structural unity and to occur chronologically in the main about the seventh century, in the maelstrom of the urban catastrophe."⁵ Following this line of reasoning, phenomena which would appear to show clear signs of continuity are ingeniously assessed the other way around, by especially stressing how "the idea of continuity was strictly implanted in the social thought of the Byzantines who considered themselves as successors to both the Biblical and the Roman past," an ideological bias that modern historians may also, perhaps unintentionally, have adopted as a guideline.⁶

Cutler and Kazhdan's argumentation offers a convenient starting point for our discussion: when viewed from the standpoint of Jewish

⁵ Cutler and Kazhdan, art. cit. p. 464.

⁶ Caveats against the danger of possible falsification of the truth have always been standard declarations of serious professional commitment to the "historian's craft." It is therefore superfluous to reiterate the fashionable mantra about how misleading previous readings of the sources could have been, not to mention the sources themselves, written as a rule in the Middle Ages at the service or at the demand of the powerful and seeking to embellish their image.

history in the terms apparently assumed by them to define a structure, the question of structural continuity or discontinuity presents even more complex questions concerning the proper understanding of the events. Assuming indeed that a social structure is a set of mutually operating forces, as was briefly described above, and assuming moreover that as a rule forces have starting points, can be weak or strong, and can be induced to accelerate or slow down by the other forces operating equally on the system, a structure may change abruptly or may maintain a fairly constant shape for a long time. Our basic questions should consequently be: were there turning points and decisively revolutionizing forces in the period under scrutiny here? Did the seventh century represent a turning point for the Jews living under Byzantine rule? And was the period between the seventh and the twelfth century one of structural continuity or change for them?

The question of periodization must, of course, be approached while keeping in mind the general remarks suggested in the introduction: taking for granted that a periodization equally suitable for every topic of historical scrutiny is impossible, we should look for a maximum common denominator between as many possible relevant segments of world history and Jewish history, and particularly the history of the Jews of Byzantium.

First of all, from a standpoint of mere *histoire événementielle*, as the French call it, there are lots of reasons to consider the first half of seventh century as a turning point both for Jewish and Christian life in Byzantium as well as in Western Europe. The Jewish world was but a part of the larger world affected by the radical transformation that occurred on the geopolitical level by the rise of the Arabs: the formerly basically bipartite configuration (on one hand subject to Sassanian rule and on the other hand subject to Roman rule) gave way to a basically tripartite one: between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, the overwhelming demographic majority of Jews were subject to Islamic rule, while an almost negligible minority is attested to in Western Europe and a even more poorly known and hardly reckonable group dwelled in Byzantium. Within a relatively short span of time, before the end of the seventh century, some of the consequences of such geopolitical restructuring became unmistakably manifest all over the geographical area roughly delineated between latitudinal lines 45 north (the northern shore of the Black Sea in Asia, the Danube and Rhine rivers in Europe) and 25 north (the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea in Asia, the inhabited regions of Northern Africa) and from east to west between

longitudinal lines 70 east (the Indus river) and 10 west (the European shores of the Atlantic ocean). In the area under scrutiny here, the structural change set in motion during the first half of the seventh century definitely closes the previous one, which was set in motion with the advent of Christianity, thus convincing contemporary historians to adopt Peter Brown's characterization of the period between the fourth and the seventh centuries as *Late Antiquity*.⁷

Peter Brown's suggestion is indeed outstandingly relevant for our discussion first of all because it focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of reality, which are of primary importance for Jewish history, rather than on military and political ones, which are of secondary importance, whatever the impact of the related events may have been; and second of all because as a matter of fact such aspects are, according to Brown, unmistakably connected with the spread of Christianity. From the standpoint of historians focusing on the history of the Jews, one can hardly imagine that the Christianization of the Empire may have had less impact on the fate of the Jews than any other factor of change. Of course, we do not have to imagine that Christianization happened at once, not even in the worldview of Constantine the Great. No one, however, would seriously contest the fact that from the fourth century onward transformation was vigorously set in motion and that the basic beliefs, or as some would prefer to say ideologies, guiding the decision-making of the men and women were naturally affected accordingly.⁸

In assuming that structural changes were set in motion by the spread of Christianity, and that one such change reached completion in the first half of the seventh century, we are ultimately bringing together the question of periodization with the other no less important questions of causality and agency into one global question of assessing and organizing the possible factors of change according to the presumed magnitude of their respective effects on the system viewed as a whole, and we are moreover granting that the spread of Christianity was a factor of outstandingly crucial importance. From the perspective suggested above by Cutler and Kazhdan, it would therefore appear almost natural to ask how the spread of Christianity affected Byzantine

⁷ P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity from Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London, 1971).

⁸ Readers will find in almost all the essays included in the present collective work numerous examples of such radical change.

cities and how the resultant structure affected in turn the Jewish settlements.

The archeological evidence so far brought to light appears to confirm beyond any reasonable doubt the decline of Byzantine cities, the majority of which appear to have been ruined, abandoned, or sharply reduced in the seventh century.⁹ However, the nature of the connection of this unquestionable fact with the loss of a considerable part of the Empire to Islam and with the ongoing process of Christianization of Byzantine cities is a matter quite difficult to assess. Perhaps the best way to approach it is to focus on the different profile displayed by Constantinople on one hand and the provinces on the other hand. As has quite convincingly been shown, in the passage from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, one major asset did survive, the imperial city of Byzantium-Constantinople, which ultimately preserved the inheritance of the fundamental late Roman institutions and the sense of continuity notwithstanding the momentous changes. Hence, in the resulting configuration, "to be a Roman" came to mean "to be a servant of the emperor of Constantinople and to be a Christian as defined in the imperial city."¹⁰ This fact may be considered complementary to the transformation of worldviews following Peter Brown's suggestion: first, the growing sense of anxiety and search for the meaning of human life, as implied in the aspiration to ascertain the connection between the hidden God and man, which was already at the root of numerous interconnected manifestations during Late Antiquity, assumed increasingly Christian modes of manifestation, such as the rise of Christian saints as intermediaries between God and man, the rise of monastic and ascetic worldviews, and so on and so forth; second, the dynamic intertwining between imperial and ecclesiastical power, later characterized as cesaro-papism led the rich and powerful to detach themselves from the municipal frameworks and provincial milieus toward the imperial court of the capital city where the new sense of Christianity appeared more compatible with their personal ambitions to achieve socio-economic and political prominence. The connection between the process of Christianization of the empire and the decline of urbanism that was already in motion during Late

⁹ C. Foss, "Archeology and the 'Twenty Cities' of Byzantine Asia," *American Journal of Archeology* 81 (1977): 469-86; C. Foss and D. Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications: An Introduction* (Pretoria, 1986); Cutler and Kazhdan, art. cit.

¹⁰ M. Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600-1025* (Berkeley, 1996), 103.

Antiquity and was occasionally accelerated by the usual calamities such as plague, famine, or war, was finally boosted as a consequence of the major geopolitical change that occurred with the rise of Islam.

The transformation that affected the provinces offered more points of discontinuity, though certainly not contradicting what has been said about Constantinople. Almost thirty years ago, Gilbert Dagron sketched a perceptively nuanced assessment of the elements capable of giving a concrete idea of the process of transformation in the provinces.¹¹ Focusing on the location of churches and other sacred edifices, on the gradual inception of burying sites within the urban perimeter, and on the role and image of bishops and clergy within the cities, Dagron concluded that beyond the decline of urbanism, Christianity did effectively promote the passage from one type of civilization to another, from a civilization of the city to a civilization of the town. In other words, populations were gradually established in towns where sacred edifices were fixed points of force; burying within the urban perimeter was justified by a new Christian anthropology and materialized as a result of a perturbation imposed by demography; the Church as institution, the clergy as society, and the ecclesiastical wealth as economic impetus emphasized the basic liberty of the urban element at the margins of the state and its laws; and finally hagiography became urban culture. To be sure, there can be little doubt that the pace of the transformation varied from one place to another. According to Dagron, Constantinople would for instance reach almost definitive urban structure already in the fifth to sixth centuries, numerous cities would do the same following the crisis of the invasions (i.e. the seventh century), while other ones would wait until the eleventh century, and for some it would never come.¹²

Be that as it may, in the passage from Antiquity to the early Middle Ages, the overall picture is definitely one of radical transformation of the urban profile of the empire, inasmuch as the aspect of urban life and number of cities are concerned. If in Justinian's reign the number of cities, including Italy and the provinces of North Africa may have been in excess of 1500, just a few hundred survived in a more or less

¹¹ G. Dagron, "Le christianisme dans la ville byzantine," *DOP* 31 (1977): 3-25.

¹² Art. cit. p. 25.

reduced size during the early Middle Ages.¹³ If the early Byzantine Empire was an aggregate of cities, the middle Byzantine Empire may be described as an aggregate of *kastra* (fortresses). Even in everyday speech the term *polis* became confined more and more to Constantinople, while a place like Ancyra or Ephesus would be designated as *kastron*.¹⁴ It does not come as a surprise that most of them were situated on the main communication roads, rivers, or seashores.

Although the fragmentary state of the documentation would discourage attempts to describe the evolution of the Jewish settlement in Byzantium in the aftermath of the consolidation of the Muslim inception in the Mediterranean area, it seems reasonable to presume that the above-mentioned trends had natural repercussions upon Jewish society. As David Jacoby has recently reiterated in a memorable outline of Byzantine Jewry, “three phenomena jump to the eye: ‘the continuity of the Jewish presence in the Empire, though admittedly not always noticeable on the local plane, the considerable geographic spreading of the Jewish communities, and the existence of a continuous migratory flux of Jews into the Byzantine space.’”¹⁵ As a rule, throughout the entire period under scrutiny here, the Jews were uninterruptedly granted freedom of settlement and movement within the Empire, which is to say they were not excluded from the Christian socio-economic space, notwithstanding the sense of distaste that the Christianization of society may have increasingly engendered vis-à-vis the Jews.

Although a detailed list of places where the presence of Jews is documented still waits for systematic compilation, there can be little doubt that the evidence of urban Jewish settlements, strongly contrasting the relatively much greater number of such settlements during the first and second centuries C.E., stands in basic accordance with the above-mentioned general pattern of the decline of Byzantine cities. If in the Hellenistic times Jewish presence is recorded in hundreds

¹³ G. Ostrogorsky, “Byzantine Cities in the Early Middle Ages,” *DOP* 13 (1959): 45-66; C. Mango, *Byzantium. The Empire of the New Rome* (London, 2005 [1st ed.: 1980]), chapter 3.

¹⁴ Mango, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹⁵ D. Jacoby, “Les Juifs de Byzance: une communauté marginalisée,” in *ΟΙ ΠΕΡΙΘΩΡΙΑΚΟΙ... ΣΤΟ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΟ*, ed. Ch. A. Maltezou (Athens, 1993), 103-154 [reprint in D. Jacoby, *Byzantium, Latin Romania and the Mediterranean*, (Aldershot, 2001), no III, 127].

of cities, one can hardly list more than a few tens in the early Middle Ages, not one of them displaying evidence of continuous presence of Jews from the first centuries C.E. to the Middle Ages. The calamities that devastated the Christians did not of course pass over the Jews. On the other hand, one can reasonably presume that, whatever may have been the extent of rural Jewish population in Antiquity and Late Antiquity, socio-economic drives such as those which advocated concentration in the cities¹⁶ were equally operative in medieval Byzantium.¹⁷ And yet, the evidence of Jewish life remained confined to a tiny number of cities situated as a rule either on the coast or on the main roads of the Roman network of communication. The diary of the twelfth-century traveler Benjamin of Tudela displays a partial list of such places. Additional names surface in other sources, though some of them may admittedly be debatable: the mention of Jews in *Lives of Saints*, for instance, requires great caution in inferring that Jews were indeed living where the hagiographers claim that the saints did supposedly encounter them, usually in order to dispute with them and finally convert them to Christianity.¹⁸

How are we then to assess the continuity of Jewish life in Byzantium assuming that the growing Christianization of society must have augmented the sense of distaste for the Jews? In fact, however reasonable this starting point may be, it nonetheless requires qualification. To begin with, and although it may perhaps be superfluous, it is worth recalling that as a rule, the Christianization of society could not have a straightforward linear effect, notwithstanding the undeniable fact that all the extremely complex factors that influenced Jewish life in Christian lands were variously affected by Christianization. Among such factors, first and foremost was the religious ideology of the holders of power (emperors, kings, patriarchs, bishops, but also less influential local authorities); second, the power of codified legislation and

¹⁶ For a comparative overview on the urban growth registered from the seventh to the eleventh centuries in the Muslim world and the correspondent revival at Byzantium and in the Christian West, see M. Lombard, "L'évolution urbaine pendant le haut moyen âge," *AESC* 12 (1957): 7–28. J. Garcin, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37, (1994): 103–6. For the growing pull of medieval urban life, see R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1966), 46–7.

¹⁷ Cfr. Toch, "Jews in Europe," in *New Cambridge Medieval History of Europe*, 557.

¹⁸ Cfr. Idem, art., cit., 548, 553, and see in this volume the essay by V. von Falkenhäusen.

the inertial dynamic force of custom; and third, the implications in terms of agency of both, the constant living of Jews and Christians side-by-side and the cumulative effect of the traditional image of the Jews portrayed by the authoritative Fathers of the Church in the actual understandings of religious ideology and law.¹⁹

Inasmuch as religious ideology is concerned, we are traditionally tempted to assign an overwhelming role to the entity we usually call *the Church*. However, such a term is not unequivocal and may therefore be strongly misleading. First, as is well known, the term points to the mystical and symbolic body of all Christians. As such, *the Church* may therefore be understood as synonymous of *Christianity*, the mirroring equivalent of *Judaism*: both terms point to conceptual abstractions, inexistent monolithic entities demanding further characterization through concrete manifestations of specific members. These Christian members, of admittedly unequal importance, were in the first place the men holding actual influential positions in the institutional hierarchy of the system (popes, patriarchs, bishops, priests). These men, who not unreasonably considered themselves as the true representatives of the system, are indeed quite often yet improperly designated by antonomasia as *the Church*, and their utterances on whatsoever matter are quoted as substantiating evidence of the Church's position on that matter; and yet, their opponents within that very same system also considered themselves as authentic representatives of the system, and consequently claimed that their specific opinions were the true representatives of the Church's position. And, needless to add, both types would conveniently sustain their arguments with hermeneutic inferences based upon texts picked up from the almost endless storehouse of authoritative sources, first and foremost among them the Bible. In principle, Sergius and Maximos or Ignatius and Phocas had thus equal credentials to support their claim to be the authentic representatives of orthodox Christian thought; but the specific weight of their claim would in practice be assessed according to their actual capability of access to power as a complementary supporting asset. The immediate impact of a declaration such as the *Ekthesis*, issued by a Council instructed by Sergius, would consequently be evaluated quite differently from the contrasting statement of a theologian such as Maximos, whatever his stature may be. And yet, as in almost all fields of social

¹⁹ Cfr. B. Dinur, *Israel ba-Golah* II/1 p. 129.

life, views are naturally doomed to assume a quite different character in the long term, once the connection with actual power is gone. We must constantly keep that in mind when referring to the Church.

A similar line of reasoning should guide us in evaluating the impact of the codified legislation and the force of custom. The specific development that took place in Byzantium, which is the continuity of the Roman tradition that situated the emperor at the top of the religious, the military and administrative hierarchy, in what has been called *cesaropapism*,²⁰ considerably, though of course not entirely reduced motives of possible disagreement and controversy between emperors and patriarchs. The terms in which the "Jewish question" would be viewed by Christian emperors would therefore not differ from those in which it would be viewed by patriarchs as drastically as they would in Western Europe by emperors and popes. We must therefore constantly keep in mind that, contrary to what could happen in medieval Western Europe, the attitude towards the Jews of Byzantium would not result in conflict of different let alone antithetic concepts between the Empire and the Church.²¹ Roman law and Christian ideology would rather be even more strictly intertwined in restraining the aspiration to remove them from the body of the Christian empire and guaranteeing their constant presence within the Christian space until the end of time. Theologians would provide reasonable answers for that, all of them rooted in the complicated perception of Christianity as *Verus Israel* and its convolute relationship to Judaism.²²

Issued from Judaism, Christianity never succeeded in denying such filiation. The umbilical cord was never rescinded, because God who sealed up the alliance on Mount Sinai was that very same God who later sent His Son to rescue humanity. As a matter of fact, Christianity defined from the very beginning its divergence from Judaism in terms of Scriptural exegesis, and yet such divergence never resulted in radical opposition. On the contrary, the essential self-definition of Christianity as *Verus Israel* engendered the necessity of *proving* to the Jews the truth of Christian faith. As long as the Jews would not spontaneously

²⁰ See G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. J. Hussey (from the German *Geschichte des Byzantinischen Staates*), 3rd revised ed. (New Brunswick, 1969), chapter 1; and see also A. Papadakis and A. Kazhdan, *ODB* I, 364–365, s.v. "Caesaropapism."

²¹ Cfr. Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance: une communauté marginalisée," cit. 117–23.

²² *Idem*, art., cit. 109–10.

come to the baptismal font, they would constitute an unresolved theological problem. Forceful removal of the Jews from the Christian space could not be a viable solution.²³

As much as the Church, viewed through its official leading organs is concerned, one can thus fully agree with Dagron's recent assessment that following the disappearance of most dissenting Christian sects, such as monophysites and Jacobites, from the Byzantine space that fell into Muslim hands, the position of the Church toward the Jews reached almost final consolidation in the 692 Council (in Trullo), which in fact appears to have been less interested in Jews proper than in "judaizing" Christians; and in any case was definitively formulated in the Eighth Canon of Nicea II (787).²⁴ At the outburst of the iconoclastic crisis, "le dossier du judaïsme est déjà à peu près clos; disons qu'il se renferme alors sur un faux procès, des injures (« judaïser ») et quelques légendes à propos d'un complot juif à l'origine de la destruction des images, sans rien apporter de neuf dans les relations entre Juifs et Chrétiens."²⁵ According to this outstanding scholar, the Church would therefore not really constitute a serious impediment to the readiness to include the Jews in the socio-economic Byzantine space, notwithstanding the stereotyped negative image of the Jews that the masters of Christian faith encouraged in every possible way.

To be sure, such official stance did not constitute the entire picture. Beyond that one should consider the repercussions of Jews and Christians living in close proximity together with actual understandings of their religious ideology and law and of its implications in terms of idiosyncratic agency. This should be assessed on the background of what has so far been said. One should thus take into account the cumulative effect of stereotypes of negative images of the Jews, the effect of anti-Jewish homilies by inflamed churchmen addressing their flock in church,²⁶ the impact of disputations eventually held in public, and many other occasional events that it would be impossible to list without going into detailed micro-history. All in all, however, the

²³ Among the legion of valuable studies on this point, see the lucid contribution of F. Parente, "La confrontation idéologique entre le Judaïsme et l'Église en Italie," in Idem, *Les Juifs et l'Église romaine à l'époque moderne (XV^e–XVIII^e siècle)* (Paris, 2007), 93–95. See also Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," cit. 107–8; 125–6.

²⁴ G. Dagron, "Introduction historique" to Dagron et Déroche, 'Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VII^e siècle,' *TM* 11 (1991): 17–8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

²⁶ See Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," cit. 140–6.

dialogic necessity and consequent legitimacy of Jewish life in Christian Byzantium does not seem to have been undermined either by occasional outbursts of anti-Jewish excitement²⁷ nor by the traditions of the Christianized Roman law and the religious ideology common to both emperors and churchmen.

But then, how are we to interpret the rationale of the four instances usually recorded in historical writing as forced conversions? As is well known, one took place under Heraclius, almost on the eve of the Arab entrance on the stage of Byzantine history; one under Leo III, apparently in the middle of the controversy on the icons; one under Basil I; and one under Romanos Lekapenos. Would not such manifestations contradict our provisional conclusion? Were they *extraordinary* expressions of casual *discontinuity* in the traditional line of the allegedly tolerant attitude toward the inclusion of the Jews in the Christian space, that the Church would not really care about and would we consequently require explanation for the deviation in terms of *exceptionality*? Or were they rather almost *ordinary* products of a constantly *intolerant* attitude toward the Jews, as a growingly intolerant Church would advocate? One can formulate the same questions from a variety of slightly different angles: were the forced conversions a phenomenon rooted in individual understandings of contingencies or rather in socio-cultural processes involving society at large? And in the later case, did the unusually violent treatment of the Jews stem from a sense of feebleness or rather of excited strength? Should those four instances of persecution of the Jews be interpreted as natural aspirations to bring to completion a successful process of ideological consolidation of the Empire, through the removal of disturbing dissenters or rather as perceptions of impending dangers? Given that the Jews did not disappear in the immediately following period, nor did their presence elicit special justifications by Byzantine writers, are we confronted with one more example of the usual gap between wishful policy and its actual implementation on the ground, or more simply with the failure of the imperial strategy? And would those instances be examples of a more general pattern of historical occurrences that viewed from the standpoint of the Jews would appear to run contrary to the perception of everybody else? For as a matter of fact, at first sight and according to the received conventional historical picture, one would have good

²⁷ For examples of such outbursts see Idem, art., cit. 148–50.

reasons to assign all four occurrences to periods of growing sense of successful consolidation. Would then such examples suggest that what was good for the preservation of the Otherness of the Jews run necessarily against what should objectively be considered good from the standpoint of everybody else?²⁸

Let it be said right away: although conventional solutions, which recur in concepts such as the above-mentioned (gap between official policy and its actual implementation on the ground, failure of imperial strategies, and the like) cannot easily be contrasted by solid evidence, they nonetheless appear rather weak. And although ambivalence was (and still is) unquestionably built in the Christian worldview concerning Jews and Judaism, it cannot be considered as a general explanatory category. Besides, since the question of continuity or discontinuity that surfaced in relation with both the implications of the Christianization of the Empire and the cases of forced conversions is directly interconnected with the question of agency on the side of the decision-makers, particularly of the emperor, traditionally viewed as law-giver "equal to the apostles,"²⁹ and consequently with the recent reappraisals or as some would say revisionisms of imperial images, a parallel reappraisal concerning the "Jewish question" would appear equally desirable, not just because the "Jewish question" can obviously not be satisfactorily assessed by viewing it as isolated from the most general context, but because so far historians did not presume as equally obvious that the overall picture of agency within that context cannot be satisfactorily assessed by viewing the "Jewish question" as marginally connected to the main stream of the events.³⁰ Perched on the shoulders of the distinguished scholars who previously addressed the matter, the following depiction will (perhaps presumptuously) attempt to venture on such a way, beginning from the four instances of allegedly forced

²⁸ As a matter of fact, puzzling examples of the same kind are legion, and not just in Jewish history. One may think, for instance, about the furious persecution of heretics and lepers alongside Jews in the first half of the thirteenth century, at the culminating moment of cultural flourishing in Western Europe; or of the tragedy that smashed European Jewry alongside black peoples in Africa and natives in Central and South America at the culminating moment of extraordinary geopolitical and cultural efflorescence toward the end of the fifteenth century; or at the extreme tragedy that almost annihilated European Jewry alongside gypsies and other "unproductive" human beings in the twentieth century at the hands of a one of the most culturally advanced European nation; examples could easily be multiplied.

²⁹ Whitton, *Making of Byzantium*, 144.

³⁰ See the general Introduction to this volume.

conversion of the Jews that, as is well known, took place under rulers whose reign was situated in extraordinarily delicate phases of the necessity to reconsider the meaning and the implications of orthodox Christian belief in terms of political and military power, both inside and outside.

Our query must therefore begin, and not just for chronological reasons, from the laudable image of Heraclius bequeathed to posterity by the Byzantine historical writing, and eagerly embraced by modern Greek writers, according to whom Heraclius's age represents a successful coherent restructuring of the basic political, socio-economic and cultural features of the Empire.³¹ Does the emperor's contradictory attitude vis-à-vis the Jews, culminating in a policy of compulsory conversion, fit such an image?³² And is the thorough reappraisal of the conventional picture of the emperor's accomplishments in which recent scholarship is actually engaged doomed to elicit a parallel revisiting of Heraclius's activity vis-à-vis the Jews? Among the numerous elements that must be considered as structurally interconnected and that appear to have been more influential than others in shaping the fate of the Jews and the retrospective recollection by the Christian chroniclers who wrote following the Arab entrance to the Mediter-

³¹ The conventional picture was clearly established by Angelo Pernice, greatly under the influence of the picture of the emperor drawn by the contemporary poet George Pisida, deacon *chartophylax* of St. Sophia, who portrayed the campaigns and the exploits of Heraclius in a coherently panegyric epical vein. According to Pernice's portrayal, the image raised of Heraclius is constantly and coherently one of a heroic leader of great wisdom and vision, who left a durable and almost revolutionary mark in nearly every institutional manifestation, and especially in the reform of the taxation system as required by the reorganization of the army in the structure of the themes and in supporting the unified orthodox definition of the Christian Empire he was heading. The successful campaign against the Persians and the restoration of the "True Cross" would thus represent the climax of such resourcefulness. The contrary view of Edward Gibbon, characterized by Pernice as completely wrong, would however maintain that the successful campaign against the Persians was absolutely extraordinary, a kind of meridian sun contrasting the ordinary obscurity characteristic of a weak emperor, substantially incapable of standing against the dangers that jeopardized the fate of the Empire from both inside and outside. (E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, v). Any attempt to provide exhaustive bibliographical references to the varieties of works situated between these two extremities would inevitably transcend the limits of this essay.

³² The matter was scrupulously addressed by top scholars of Byzantine history and culture, such as Dagron, "Introduction historique" to Dagron et Déroche, 17-46; A. Cameron, "Blaming the Jews: The Seventh-Century Arab Invasions of Palestine in Context," *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron = TM* 14 (2002): 57-78. The relevant sources and previous works are exhaustively listed in these works.

ranean scene and constitute our main evidence, some seem to have been very significant in the recent revisiting of the issues related to continuity and discontinuity in the above-mentioned assessment of this emperor's image: the military confrontation with the Persians;³³ the importance of Christian tradition and religious zeal in shaping the worldviews of all Byzantine Christians in the depiction of the imperial commitment to Christianity and the strife for doctrinal unification—success or failure, victory or defeat, were all viewed as outcomes of divine will, and consequently of people's achievements to please God and overturn His potential fury;³⁴ the imperial commitment to previous legislation; and finally the new sense acquired by the competition between Christians and Jews about their respective rights in Jerusalem following the Arab conquest.³⁵

The reality of the pressure put upon the Jews to abjure is unquestionable. And yet, beyond a few dubious references concerning Jerusalem and Palestine, Arabia and Egypt, and beyond a no less questionable mention by the Western chronicler Fredegar, actual forced conversion is unmistakably recorded solely from Carthage.³⁶ In a letter from that city to a still inconclusively identified fellow monk in Palestine, most probably presumed to agree with him concerning the appraisal of the imperial policy, Maximus Confessor wrote in 632:³⁷

³³ Recent scholarship has indeed thoroughly challenged the received opinion which attributed to Heraclius the reform of the army through the creation of the so-called *themata* and, among other things, correlated with that reform the successful campaign against the Persians, culminated with the restoration of the True Cross in Jerusalem. See J. F. Haldon, "Military Service, Military Lands, and the Status of Soldiers: Current Problems and Interpretations," *DOP* 47 (1993): 1–67; Whittow, *Making of Byzantium*, 113–26; W. E. Kaegi, "Some Reconsiderations on the Themes, 7th to 9th Centuries," *JÖB* 16 (1967): 39–53; idem, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003), 113.

³⁴ Whittow, *Making of Byzantium*, chapter 6; Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*, 72–4, 105–6.

³⁵ Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*, 79–80.

³⁶ Dagron, "Introduction historique" cit.

³⁷ The relevant text is preserved only in few manuscripts (cod. Vat. gr. 1502, 505, 504, 507) and was repeatedly published by S. L. Epifanovic, *Materialy k izuc zizni i tvoreni prep. Maksima Ispovednika* (Kiev, 1917), 84; R. Devréesse, "La fin inédite d'une lettre de Saint Maxime: Un baptême forcé de Juifs et Samaritains a Carthage en 632," *RSR* 17 (1937): 25–36; J. Starr, "St. Maximus and the Forced Baptism at Carthage in 632," *BNJ* 16 (1940): 192–6; C. Laga, "Judaism and Jews in Maximus Confessor's Works—Theoretical Controversy and Practical Attitude," *ByzSlav* 51 (1990): 177–188; Dagron, art. cit., esp. 30–2.

The blessed servant of God, the well-famed eparch who commands over our affairs here, when he regressed from the City Sovereign, made Christians...all the Jews and the Samaritans throughout the whole of Africa...by order of our most pious emperors...on the day of the holy Pentecost of this fifth current indiction. I hear that this has happened throughout the whole realm of the Romans.

As far as Carthage is concerned, the events described by Maximus are confirmed beyond reasonable doubt by the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*,³⁸ which adds considerable evidence about numerous other matters that will not be addressed here.

Did the emperor really issue and dispatch a specific decree ordering the forced conversion of the Jews of the Empire?³⁹ The eparch of Carthage certainly did not receive such a written decree, for (as Maximus points out) he was just back from Constantinople where he allegedly got direct instructions. But what about the other places? Was an imperial decree ordering wholesale violent conversion of the Jews dispatched to the prefects? Is it by mere chance that, at least up to the present moment, no evidence of such a document has surfaced? Is it by mere chance that no evidence of forced conversion surfaced from the capital city of Constantinople, where one would reasonably imagine that the imperial policy should have been implemented accurately, but where the presence of Jews does not seem to have registered discontinuity? How really defiant were the Jews in the worldview of

³⁸ See "*Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, édition et traduction par Vincent Déroche," *TM* 11 (1991): 47–229, followed by the commentary of Dagron and Déroche, *ibidem*, 230–73.

³⁹ As a matter of fact, the question does not seem to have been previously penned in such a straightforward way, though some doubt must have prompted the flowing formulations of cautious scholars such as those cited in the previous note. See, for instance, Dagron, *art. cit.*, pp. 30–31. All in all, although Dagron does not cast doubt that Heraclius may have taken the decision to compel the Jews to baptize nor on the fact that forced conversion did take place in Carthage, he does not seem to suggest that an explicit edict was issued by the emperor. Dagron would even be ready to admit that the decision may have been taken already in 630 and communicated orally to the prefect of Constantinople much before May 31 of 632 (the date of the event at Carthage). Av. Cameron prefers to call it "Heraclius's *attempt to order the baptism*" (67), though she immediately puzzlingly adds that "this was the first such *law* introduced by a Byzantine emperor, but on the eve of Iconoclasm Leo III followed in the same direction, and a final attempt is attributed to Basil I in the ninth century" (*italics mine*). We shall return shortly to Leo III and Basil. In general, however, most authors mention the promulgation of an imperial decree: thus J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641–1204* (Athens, 1939), 2; A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry* (New York, 1971), 53; A. Linder, "Ecclesia and Synagoga in the Medieval Myth of Constantine the Great," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 54 (1976): 1027–29; and many others.

Heraclius? And what happened to the alleged forcible conversion in the following period? Does the evidence point to extraordinary perfunctory events,⁴⁰ at most dictated by transient perceptions of urge of revenge or threat?⁴¹

Our perplexity is further enhanced by the puzzling evidence concerning the imperial attitude vis-à-vis the Jews in the period framed by the capitulation of the Persians in 628 and the events related by Maximus. In 628 Heraclius is reported to have revoked his brother's decision to exterminate the Jews of Edessa, charged with treacherous support to the Persians during the war; in 630, en route to Jerusalem, he is reported to have issued a document granting safety to the Jews of the Galilee who would have feared similar charges. At almost the same time, the emperor is reported to have successfully persuaded a prominent Jew of Tiberias to convert; finally, upon learning about the ferocious slaughter of the Christians on the occasion of the capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614, he would have been convinced to forget his previously mentioned commitment to the safety of the Jews and allow a massacre of every Jew eventually caught near Jerusalem and in the Galilee. Does this apparently contradictory evidence make sense? One can, of course, imagine numerous scenarios capable of offering plausible solutions, and yet none of them would finally be absolutely adequate, whatever the amount of preconceived bias one would be ready to allow to both, the sources and their interpreters down to most recent times.⁴² There is no need of a special incentive to grant that both the sources and the interpretations display plenty

⁴⁰ Thus Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry* cit. 54: "At Carthage, where the decree was promulgated, its application was perfunctory, and had no effects in the province."

⁴¹ According to Sharf, for instance (*Byzantine Jewry* cit.), the decree of 632 was an attempt to safeguard imperial security by eliminating the political dangers of religious dissidence (53). The same idea was previously suggested by Starr, "St. Maximus and the Forced Baptism at Carthage" cit. 196, though more cautiously: "The fear of Heraclius lest the Jews and the Samaritans make common cause with the threatening Arab hordes still seems to me the most plausible explanation, although there is no evidence that as early as 632 the danger confronting the remote provinces should have been sensed in Constantinople." In the same direction, though in a more general tone, W. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge, 2000), esp. 207–18; J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), 337–48; D. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia, 1994).

⁴² For instance, the story about the Jew of Tiberias that Heraclius allegedly persuaded to convert was not unreasonably interpreted as a kind of pre-figuration of the imminent pressure to enforce conversion (Dagron, art. cit. 28).

of literary and ideological motives; and that holds especially true concerning the one recent attempt to substantiate this in the case of the Persian conquest of Jerusalem since it can hardly be said to have added helpful insights regarding the recollection of the events.⁴³ Our outline endeavors to reappraise the matter following the above-mentioned assumption that the overall historical picture cannot be satisfactorily assessed by viewing the "Jewish question" as accidentally connected to the main stream of the events.

We have already suggested that the elements that may have been more influential than others in shaping Jewish fate should be viewed as structurally interconnected with the crucial issues at stake in the period under discussion. As a matter of fact, the specific period framed above was one of uncertainty mixing comfort rooted in the far-seeing powerful achievements of the emperor with anxiety rooted in the complexity of a still suspicious internal political arena. It is now advisable to consider the impact of the traditional hostile feelings toward religious dissidents in general and particularly toward Jews beyond the construction of the worldview of the individuals involved in the decision-making processes, focusing upon the role assigned to the Jews in the portrayal of the images of the powerful, particularly of the emperor, and the expected feedback to those images from the public opinion. To put it more plainly: it is here suggested to focus on the role assigned to the Jews in Byzantine political discourse and propaganda, similar to modern evocations of Jews or Israel by manipulators of public opinion stirred by various kinds of expectations, often quite loosely connected with what they may really think about Jews or Israel.⁴⁴ *Favorable attitudes toward Jews* may often be a no less contorted way to convey a socio-cultural and political message than *hostile attitudes toward Jews*. Both reflect little concern with Jews, if at all. And yet, then no differently than now, propaganda could occasionally get out of control.

In the case of Heraclius, the victory against the Persians and the restoration of the "True Cross" in 630 in Jerusalem stirred such triumphant

⁴³ E. Horowitz, "The Vengeance of the Jews was Stronger than their Avarice: Modern Historians and the Persian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614," *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (1998): 1-39.

⁴⁴ For examples of such multifaceted political uses of the Jewish stereotype, one can think about rulers extending privileges to the Jews as signs of independence from competing contrary powers, such as medieval and Renaissance monarchs and princes contrasting Popes, and so on and so forth.

expectations of immense magnitude⁴⁵ that may well have induced the emperor to ponder on the profit that his political agenda could gain by strengthening the link between the royal and the religious image he was setting up and the role that the Jews could play in such a context. The profitability of putting pressure on the Jews to abjure must therefore be assessed as intertwined with the major policy which did eventually produce the *Ekthesis*. As a matter of fact, the conversionist effort vis-à-vis the Jews is situated in the period framed by the above-mentioned major events, that is to say within the decade between the capitulation of the Persians in 628, followed by the restoration of the True Cross in Jerusalem in 630, the invasion of the Arabs and the fall of Jerusalem in 637, and finally the publication of the *Ekthesis*, composed by patriarch Sergius and published in Saint Sofia in 638. The strife for doctrinal unification, whatever the underlying motive for action may have been, was no less motivated by the wish to set up the image of the emperor as a heroic warrior in the defense of the true Christian faith. Thus, to the emperor who just in that time assumed the title βασιλεύς, which no emperor before him had been willing to do, and probably for the first time referred to himself in the *inscriptio* of a novella dated March 21, 629 as πιστός ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεύς,⁴⁶ hardening the pressure to abjure on the Jews must have appeared as a venture most likely to encounter feeble opposition on the ground,⁴⁷ and thus offer immediate gains. The image of the emperor as a faithful fighter for a religiously integrated state would dissipate any doubts that his opponents might eventually cast, no matter what the true beliefs of the ruler may have been, though in fact there is really no reason to suspect that Heraclius may have been skeptical about the efficacy of the divine

⁴⁵ This point was effectively made by Av. Cameron (art. cit. 69 ff.) in order to substantiate her claim that "the representation of the Jews in seventh-century Christian texts" is "surely implicated" with a set of associations of the meaning of that symbol for Christian believers. Following this line of reasoning, she further rightly insists on how other incidences, "chosen almost at random, demonstrate the willingness on the part of Christian writers to use the literary image of the Jew to point their own ideological lessons" following "a tendency already very well established and for which there were many precedents" (75).

⁴⁶ Irfan Shahîd, "Heraclius ΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΕΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ," *DOP* 34 (1980-1981): 225-37.

⁴⁷ If Shahîd is right in conjecturing an opposition of the Senate to the emperor's decision to make use of the new formula that would mark a significant change in the most prominent facet of the image of Byzantium at home and abroad, the attempt to strengthen the royal image by drawing public attention to the Jews would appear even more plausible.

assistance of the Virgin depicted on his banner. It therefore stands to reason that the entire set of these matters was intensely discussed in the emperor's entourage.

The emperor's intents were undoubtedly made publicly known, though we do not know how. It stands to reason that, as it usually happens in such cases, interpretations and responses differed. The eparch of Carthage understood the emperor's wish as an instruction to take action, and that is what he eventually did in the most brutal manner described in the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*. He must not have been the only one, as the above-mentioned hearsay letter of Maximus unmistakably confirms, though partly as hearsay. And, as perceptively suggested by Dagron, it is quite probable that such was also the understanding of the Merovingian ambassadors at their return from Constantinople at that time.⁴⁸

But such was not the understanding of everyone, especially of the knowledgeable of law and theology. That the anti-Jewish feeling was built into the worldviews and found natural expression in the common parlance of everyone, stirred as it was by the traditional Christian teachings repeatedly uttered from the pulpit of the churches, hardly needs to be substantiated. And yet, the significance and the intensity of such feeling and its translation in concrete action would vary, according to the concrete situations in which Christians and Jews might find themselves together and to the different understandings of the consequences of specific actions. That the final conversion of the Jews would be the hopeful conclusion of mankind's salvation at the end of history was the self-evident conviction of every believer in the word of Jesus. However, few theologians and men of law would agree that the road to that end should be the road of violence, although the rationale of their reservations would not be the same and as a rule would not equal the attitude toward Christian heretics. The reservations of Maximus, who distasted Jews and Judaism no less than Heraclius and his advisers, were that first of all, forcible conversion was tantamount to desecration of the Eucharistic mystery, for the sacred wafer would be administered to people improperly shown the essence of belief (τοῖς

⁴⁸ Dagron et Déroche, art. cit. 33, note 79. It would indeed make great sense to imagine that the wave of forced conversions registered in the thirties of the seventh century in the West, and accordingly reported by Western chronicles as instigated by Heraclius, may be connected with such reports, however they may have spread all over the Mediterranean area.

μὴ προεπιδειξαμένοις τῇ πίστει γνώμην ἀρμόδιον); second, it would be destructive for the souls of those forcefully baptized, for they would no longer be simply unbelievers but rather heretics; and finally, they would constitute a permanent danger of infection of the sane body of Christian believers. Contrary to heretic Christians, who should be forced to repent, Jews should be persuaded to give up their stubborn beliefs. Maximus does not say how he would advise to proceed to such an end, but one can reasonably presume that disputation should be the main means. Otherwise how should one imagine that Jews would be properly shown the essence of belief?

Some three decades earlier Gregory the Great issued a similar road-map. Pressure to convert the Jews was to be exercised, within the terms of reference of the law (a point that Maximus did not mention), and following precise rules: disputation, promises of socio-economic gains, threats—not violence. Gregory's posture became in the course of the Middle Ages the foundation of the Catholic attitude toward the Jews. Thorough comparison between the views of Maximus and Gregory, perhaps the most prominent Christian theologians of the early Middle Ages, is still a desideratum. One can however safely assume that, in a period of deep religious challenges and of missionary efforts, both would aspire to set up a coherent position in which the attitude toward the Jews would be organically integrated in the fabric of a genuine Christian vision of salvation, not just one of ephemeral political gains, certainly not one detrimental to the essence of Christianity. Viewed from such a standpoint, Maximus's reservations are definitely consistent with his opposition to the religious policy that was gradually taking shape in the capital under the influence of Sergius, for his opposition to the *Ekthesis* was no less passionate than the opposition to the line of action concerning the Jews.⁴⁹

One may be tempted to take the argument one step further: just as the image of Heraclius as worth of praise for the conversion of the Jews faded quite soon in Byzantine historical writing (contrary to the Western largely imaginary tradition), so did the strife for doctrinal unification, for the monothelite doctrine of the *Ekthesis* also rejected before long. But while the *Ekthesis* was formally abrogated, no official

⁴⁹ The fact that from North Africa Maximus moved to Rome may perhaps be a further indication as to the basic compatibility of his theology with that of the Roman See.

dismissal of the purported decree of forceful conversion has survived—one more argument in favor of our hypothesis that such a decree was never officially promulgated. Doctrinal disputation aimed at defeating the Jews, no less than at reinforcing the shaping of the Christian perception of religious identity, remained the main road to salvation.

The relatively great number of literary disputations that survive from the seventh century reflects the urge to reinforce the Christian perception of religious identity in that particularly shaken age.⁵⁰ There is no reason to adopt a rigid stance regarding the vexing question whether all these texts were exclusively for internal purport or if they possibly testify to real confrontation with Jews. Inasmuch as the Jews were not removed from the Christian space, they could variously offer terms of actual comparison. In the shaping of the images that the men who viewed themselves as responsible for the destiny of the Christian Empire had and were interested in diffusing to the public opinion, the anti-Jewish stance, which let everyone represent one's rivals as behaving like Jews,⁵¹ could thus assign them a role definitely out of proportion as compared to their real importance.

To summarize, Heraclius's religious policy in the specific chronological segment delimited by the restoration of the True Cross, the publication of the *Ekthesis*, and the forced conversion described by Maximus, can be interpreted as coherently following such a pattern. There is no need to linger on the apparent contradictions characterizing the imperial behavior: just as the image of a most devote Christian ruler should not be viewed as contrasting the marriage with Martina, notwithstanding the contrary position of the churchmen, the apparently contradictory decisions of the emperor regarding the Jews should not elicit forceful attempts to conciliate between them. Nor is there any need to presume that a specific imperial decree, unjustifiable in terms of Roman law, was issued and that it did not have the desired effect or was subsequently abrogated. The emperor and his advisers certainly strove to influence public opinion by diffusing a panegyric image of an emperor at the service of Christianity, and the pressure put upon the Jews to convert, almost certainly in the course

⁵⁰ V. Déroche, "La polémique anti-judaïque au VI^e et VII^e siècle: un memento inédit, les Képhalaia," *TM* 11 (1991): 275–311; idem, "Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'Islam" (7–8 siècles), *REB* 57 (1999): 141–61; and see his article in this volume.

⁵¹ See Dagron, "Judaïser," *TM* 11 (1991): 359–80; Cfr. J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, 1999), 5–65.

of public disputations, was part of that publicity. What happened in Carthage, and presumably elsewhere, should rather be viewed as one more example of how propaganda can easily get out of control and lead to dreadful violence, notwithstanding the fact that in terms of Roman law and theological orthodoxy, violence would not find its way to be legitimately enacted.

This same pattern is even more visible in the context of the iconoclastic feud initiated by Leo III. In that context, both the iconodulic and iconoclastic propagandas would exploit stereotypical components of the image of the Jews according to their respective needs.⁵² Thus, the patently legendary stories about the alleged influence of Judaism and particularly of Jewish soothsayers in importing iconoclastic trends from the Islamic area, and accordingly Leo's iconoclastic worldview tell more about the diabolic component of the image of the Jew in the common Byzantine worldview⁵³ than about the real course of the events, whatever they may actually have been. And though the tradition, recorded by Theophanes, that Leo III compelled the Jews (and the Montanists) to undergo baptism may unintentionally reflect actual occurrences, as they were possibly recorded by the now lost iconoclastic sources on which Theophanes relied, the precise significance of the information (thus doubly deformed) is definitely elusive.⁵⁴ In this case as well, no evidence of an edict ordering the forced conversion of the Jews has surfaced. Should such an edict actually have been issued, it would contradict not only the above-mentioned alleged influence of the Jews on the shaping of Leo's worldview, but also the fact that no significant change of legislation concerning the Jews is included in the *Ecloga* promulgated during Leo's reign.⁵⁵ Scholars intrigued by such apparently contradictory recollections have suggested several

⁵² The texts are exhaustively reproduced and discussed by S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1973).

⁵³ The fundamental importance of the devil in the Byzantine worldview, both as an explanatory category of actual events and source of anxiety in dangerous situations, was concisely stressed by Whittow, *Making of Byzantium*, 105–6. As a matter of fact, the diabolic component of Jewish nature is a *constante de longue durée* in the Christian explanation of the Jewish stubborn refusal to recognize the advent of Christ. Although the evolution of the idea in Byzantium still waits for detailed analysis, we may at first approximation extrapolate according to what has already been assessed for the Western area of Christianity.

⁵⁴ Theophanes, *Chronicle*, Anno mundi 6214: See *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*... Ed. by C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford, 1997), 554–5.

⁵⁵ On the *Ecloga*, it suffices to refer to L. Burgmann, "Ecloga," *ODB*, I: 672–673.

harmonious representations of what may actually have happened by variously speculating on the sequence of the events⁵⁶ and the presumed “kernel of truth” normally evoked by historians confronted by legendary accounts of past events.⁵⁷ But for our interests here there is no need to embark on speculations of this kind, nor even to the close philological and anthropological scrutiny that such accounts undoubtedly deserve. The contradictory evidence can satisfactorily be explained assuming that the evidence at hand does not disclose more than that: the manipulating role assigned to the Jews and Judaism in Byzantine political discourse and propaganda and particularly in the images that powerful people, specifically the emperor, were broadcasting of themselves and the expected feedback to those images from the public opinion. But to repeat, although the Jews and Judaism were again driven in the unquestionably shaken times of the iconoclastic feud from the peripheral place they normally occupied toward the center of destructive attention, compelling violence to abjure was not legally enacted. The fact that no Jewish source mentions even indirectly any substantial change during Leo’s reign may perhaps be added as a further, though admittedly feeble, supporting element to this line of reasoning. Jews then overcame the iconoclastic turmoil, however passionately they may have observed the desecration of icons and relics in the open public space in which everyday life took place side-by-side with their neighbors. One can nonetheless imagine that delight must have been matched by anxiety that things could be reversed and blame put upon the Jews, as in fact the iconodulic propaganda that certainly circulated already underground during the iconoclastic suggested to cautiously provident Jewish minds.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ According to Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 2–3, “it would be difficult to see how in a time filled with foreign attacks, and with domestic revolts due to the adoption of the iconoclastic policy in 725, sufficient administrative energy could be spared for the purpose [of enforcing the edict].” According to Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 67–74, the promulgation of the Ecloga would have occurred sometime before Leo’s anti-Jewish decree, published purportedly “at precisely the time when he was taking the road to full iconoclasm.” And see Linder’s explanation in this volume.

⁵⁷ R. Bonfil, “Can Medieval Storytelling Help in Understanding Midrash,” in *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, and History*, ed. M. Fishbane (New York, 1993), 228–54.

⁵⁸ One has of course to allow occasional outbursts of less cautious observers, not to speak of insane minds, who may variously have given free course to their anti-Christian sentiments.

Our provisional conclusion may now be further substantiated by looking at the case of the forced conversion allegedly ordered by Basil I. At striking variance with the usual lack of Jewish documentation, the scarce records displayed by Byzantine chronicles are in this case matched by a most conspicuous amount of mentions in various kinds of Jewish sources. And yet, the factual matter appears quite far from being univocally settled, its significance even more so. Let us begin from the Byzantine sources. Beyond mere and not contemporaneous mentions of the bare event in the dry style usually employed by the annals, such as “in the year 6382 the Jews were baptized,”⁵⁹ the most significant account appears to be the panegyric reference by Theophanes Continuatus,⁶⁰ which may now be read in the English translation by Ihor Ševčenko:⁶¹

Aware that God cherishes nothing more than the salvation of souls and that he who brings forth the worthy from the worthless is the spokesman of Christ, the emperor did not show himself careless or indifferent to this apostolic work, but first captured the nation of the Jews, uncircumcised and obstinate as it was when left to itself, and led it to submission to Christ; for he commanded that they bring forth proofs of their own beliefs and enter into disputations (κελεύσας γὰρ αὐτοὺς τῆς οἰκείας θρησκείας τὰς ἀποδείξεις κομίζοντας εἰς διαλέξεις χωρεῖν), and either demonstrate that their tenets were firm and irrefutable or, persuaded (καὶ ἢ δεικνύναι τὰ κατ’ αὐτοῦ ἰσχυρά τε καὶ ἀναντίρρητα ἢ πειθομένους) that Christ was the capstone of the Law and the Prophets and that the Law was but a shadow that is scattered by the sun’s rise, be converted to the teachings of the Lord, and be baptized (προσέρχεσθαι τῇ τοῦ κυρίου διδαχῇ καὶ βαπτίζεσθαι). By distributing dignities among those who were being converted, removing the burden of taxes they had previously to pay, and promising to make full-fledged citizens of those who had been deprived of rights, he lifted the veil of blindness *from many of them* and led them to the faith of Christ (πολλοὺς τοῦ ἐπικειμένου καλύμματος τῆς παρώσεως ἠλευθέρωσε καὶ πρὸς πίστιν εἴλκυσε τὸ Ἰησοῦ), even if in their majority they, like unto dogs, returned to their own vomit after the emperor’s departure from this life. But even though they, or rather some from among them, remained like black moors (ὥς

⁵⁹ So does the Anonymous Sicilian Chronicle (see Schreiner, *Byzantinische Kleinchroniken*, 333): ἔτους ςπβ’ ἐβαπτίσθησαν οἱ ἐβραῖοι ἰνδικτιῶνος ζ’. See Starr, *Jews*, n° 61, p. 127.

⁶⁰ Theoph. Cont. 341–2 (PG 109, 357).

⁶¹ *Theophanis Continuati Chronographiae Liber V, quo Vita Basilii imperatoris amplectitur*, recensuit anglice vertit indicibus instruxit Ihor Ševčenko, (Berolini et Novi Eboraci, 2005), § 95: 302–4. And see in Ševčenko’s notes there a list of references to parallel sources.

Αιθίοπες) unchanged, at least the God-loving emperor, on account of his zeal, was to be rewarded by God with full wages for his work.

Beyond the impressive array of the stereotypical rhetorical clichés, one can hardly interpret this paragraph as unmistakably mentioning an imperial *edict* imposing compulsory baptism. The emperor's *order* (κέλευσις) would rather appear to urge systematic pressure by means of (public) disputations matched by promises of dignities, exemption from discriminating taxation, and restitution of full-fledged citizenship.⁶² As a consequence of such systematic pressure, we are told, many succumbed and were indeed baptized, but after the death of the emperor they returned to Judaism. Although the meaning of the concluding sentence may leave some doubt, whether the subject of *remained unchanged* should be understood to be the same as the aforementioned ones who returned to Judaism after having been baptized or rather those who were not persuaded and resisted baptism during the emperor's life, it seems almost certain that either it adds a further element to the above picture or it simply corroborates it by means of calculated repetition. Be that as it may, it would seem that at least according to this account, no imperial edict imposing wholesale compulsory baptism was published. The fact that no imperial document of this kind was found among the documentary evidence listed by Franz Dölger might then indirectly, though admittedly inadequately, corroborate such a conclusion. In fact, however, there can be little doubt that the imperial missionary pressure marked remarkable success: the great number of Jews that were really brought to the baptismal font could be recorded by the imperial chroniclers as representing "the Jews."

Do the Jewish sources contradict this conclusion? The most detailed among such sources is the account offered in the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*, composed in 1054 in Capua (Southern Italy), one of the most valuable family-chronicles casting light on the beginnings of Jewish life and culture not just in Southern Italy but rather in Medieval Europe and especially in the so-called Ashkenazi area. The text, published by Adolf Neubauer in 1895, and again in a fine edition by Benjamin Klar in 1944, was translated into English by Marcus Salzman in 1924, and repeatedly exploited as a major source for the history of the Jews in medieval Byzantium by various authors, among which most notably

⁶² As such it was indeed understood by R. Jenkins. See R. J. H. Jenkins, "The Chronological Accuracy of the Logothete for the Years A.D. 867-913," *DOP* 19 (1965): 100.

Joshua Starr. In drawing the panegyric picture of one of his ancestors, Rabbi Shefatiah, quite well known as a composer of *piyyutim* that still survive in the liturgy of Italian and Ashkenazi Jews, the author of the chronicle records a fantastic tale, structured according to the usual categories of stereotypical medieval historical narratives and intertwined with motifs recalling similar tales drawn from the storehouse of biblical and post-biblical Jewish production, about Shefatiah's stay in the Imperial Palace, mainly in order to cure Basil's daughter from a demon's possession. In the course of his stay in the imperial palace, Shefatiah is also said to have successfully confronted the missionary pressure put upon him by the emperor by means of disputations seeking to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, attractive offers of socio-economic advantages, and finally threats of severe punishments. Finally, according to the tale, the successful deliverance of the imperial princess was then rewarded by the deliverance of the Jewish communities of southern Italy from the emperor's persecution, penned as a departure from the wholesale order to impose forceful conversion directed by Basil to all the territories of the Empire.

Later Askenazi authors recount traditions which, like the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*, situate Shefatiah in the time of the missionary pressure of Basil I, and relate his efforts to deliver *five* Jewish communities of southern Italy from the emperor's persecution. Two such traditions recall also the event as a reward to Shefatiah for having cured the emperor's daughter from a demon's possession, but attribute (erroneously, it would appear) to him the composition of a *selihah* purportedly correlated with the Byzantine emperor's anti-Jewish policy.⁶³ Both traditions, however, run contrary to a variant one, which attributes (correctly, it would appear) the composition of the above-mentioned *selihah* to Shlomoh ha-Bavli, another tenth century composer of *piyyutim*. According to that variant the deliverance took place following a weird and wonderful miracle occurred during the torture of an old man who refused to abjure, and which brought upon the persecutors involved in the torture the type of death decreed for

⁶³ The sources are conveniently reproduced in the documentary appendices accompanying Klar's edition of the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* (47), namely: (a) a tradition reported by Rabbi Judah b. David; (b) a similar tradition reported by the thirteenth-century author of the commentary to Ashkenazi and French liturgy *Arugat ha-Bosem*, Abraham b. Azriel (see E. E. Urbach's edition, vol. ii, Jerusalem 1947: 181–2). On the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* see now R. Bonfil, *History and Folklore in a Medieval Jewish Chronicle—The Family Chronicle of Ahima'az ben Paltiel* (Leiden, 2009).

the stubborn Jews, and finally caused the withdrawal of the order.⁶⁴ In any case, according to these sources, some communities of Southern Italy were miraculously delivered from a wholesale imperial persecution ordering compulsory conversion. The tradition of the deliverance of the communities of Southern Italy from imperial missionary pressure may well have been adjusted according to the profits expected by the adaptors within the social groups in which they operated. But this must not catch our attention now.⁶⁵ We may safely rest our case on the above-mentioned conclusions that Basil's missionary pressure did not depart from the traditional pattern. Disputations, socio-economic enticements, and threats were all in agreement with the rules of the game. What could, and eventually did change was the intensity of imperial involvement, itself naturally triggered by the factors that usually affect the decision-making process: idiosyncrasies, ideologies, contingencies, and so on and so forth. It is not at all necessary to assume that Basil issued a specific decree ordering to forcefully impose conversion upon the Jews. It is sufficient to assume that Basil's missionary pressure was exercised in especially harsh ways within the terms of reference of the traditional imperial policy that would not depart from the traditional stance to admit the persistence of the Jews in the Empire, should they be ready to stand the burden that the perseverance in their religious belief would imply.

What is unquestionable is that the Jews, no matter how few and insignificant they were, and no differently than before Basil's time, had in the emperor's imagination a most precise role to play in his effort to diffuse in the public opinion the image of himself as a missionary warrior in defense of orthodoxy, as a builder, and as a lawgiver. First of all, he had to cope with the complex issue of preventing the Bulgars joining the western church, a matter that had far reaching implications on the political and military plane. The Oecumenic Council of 869–870, called by the emperor and Ignatius, sanctioned the subordination of an autonomous Bulgar Church to Constantinople, but left considerable signs of dissatisfaction and possible opposition among the partisans of Photius, whose reputation as a knowledgeable theolo-

⁶⁴ This variant tradition surfaces, apparently for the first time by the twelfth-century scholar R. Joseph Kara. A detailed discussion may be found in E. Fleisher, *The Poems of Shelomo Ha-Bavli*, (Jerusalem, 1973), 24–32 (Hebrew), where additional bibliography is conveniently listed.

⁶⁵ See Bonfil, *History and Folklore in a Medieval Jewish Chronicle*, 76–80.

gian was unquestionably greater than that of Ignatius. Second of all, the obsessive search for fame eternally visualized in the monumental building of churches, and particularly of the Νέα Ἐκκλησία, equally prompted criticism of the emperor as a supreme commander of the army: the loss of Syracuse to the Arabs in 878 was overtly attributed to the decision to retain the sailors in the building of the Church instead sending them to defend Sicily; criticism could hardly underestimate the turn that things were increasingly taking in Southern Italy under Arab pressure. The will to have Byzantine Law reaffirmed under his name, with the publication of the Basilicas, could but adequately put the last touches on the vision of such a megalomaniac ruler. Furthermore, in all three planes imperial propaganda could grasp immediate gains through the manipulation of purported successes in defeating the arguments of Jewish leaders and finally bringing the Jews to the baptismal font. As a matter of fact, the intertwining of the missionary pressure on the Jews with the criticism of the opponents of the imperial policy as a whole is eloquently articulated in the remarkable text of Gregorius Asbestos recently discussed in detail by Gilbert Dagron.⁶⁶

The *Chronicle of Ahima'az* does unmistakably confirm such a conclusion. According to that text, indeed, the emperor carried out two disputations with Shefatiah. Jewish memory would of course maintain the defeat of the emperor in both. And yet, both convey the sense of the matters at stake and subtly allude to the emperor's goals. In the first, the matter in discussion was whether Basil I had indeed superseded not only Justinian but also Solomon as builder of a House of worship.⁶⁷ In the second and last encounter he strove to convince Shefatiah to disavow his faith, first through friendly disputation, then through promises of considerable gifts, and finally threatening to cause

⁶⁶ G. Dagron, "Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée sur le baptême des Juifs," *TM* 11 (1991): 313–57. Cfr. Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," cit. 125–6.

⁶⁷ I have already discussed this matter in some length in Bonfil, "La visione ebraica di Daniele nel contesto bizantino del secolo x," *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* n.s. 40, (Roma 2004 [2003]), 25–65. Basil's argument on this subject is a particularly eloquent example of the intertwining of the drive to shape the imperial image in terms of confrontation with the memory of the most Christian lawgiver and builder, the emperor of Byzantium (Justinian) with the debate against Jews on a specific matter pointing to a multiple set of ideas: the idea of Constantinople as a new Jerusalem and of the major Church of Constantinople as a substitute of the Sanctuary, the idea that such substitution was but a detail of the larger idea that Christianity had substituted Judaism as the true Israel, and finally the idea that scriptural debate was the most efficacious way of persuading the Jews.

him great troubles; in front of the seriousness of the situation, Shefatiah “cried out in a very great voice *My mighty lord, are you doing me violence?*”⁶⁸ and that put an end to the episode; the rules of the game were observed, the Jews successfully overcame imperial pressure, and (inasmuch as the settlements of Southern Italy preserved the memory of the events) things could resume their ordinary way. If we are right in such an interpretation of the documents, the enthusiastically favorable mention of Leo VI recorded in the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*, and independently confirmed in the Hebrew *Vision of Daniel*, should not come as a surprise, and even less as a problem, notwithstanding the evidence that Leo's legislative activity concerning the Jews can hardly be considered compassionate: it would simply signify that the harshness of Basil's approach to the “Jewish question” came to an end with the emperor's death and that things returned to their usual mode.⁶⁹

The renewed impulse towards the literary production of Judaeo-Christian disputations during the ninth and tenth centuries may certainly be considered as an indirect support to such a conclusion. As a matter of fact, purported success of the Jews in such debates held in Jerusalem was reported as the immediate impulse to engage in the fourth and perhaps most destructive jeopardizing assault on Jewish life in Byzantium during the last years of the reign of Romanus I Lecapenus. As rightly stressed by Sharf, Romanus, like Basil, was an interloper and usurper. His reasons had almost certainly nothing to do with the immediate Jewish situation. He had to consolidate in the public opinion the idea that, in the period of political uncertainty faced by the Empire in the aftermath of Leo's death, his seizing of power through the marriage of his daughter Elena to the fourteen-year old future Emperor Constantine VII, and then taking precedence over Constantine and having himself crowned emperor, was welcome by God. Administrative and military successful handling of affairs both in the Balkan and the Muslim borders could naturally defy possible suspicious internal opposition. But since Constantine was getting older and threatening doubts could arise, the need to counteract them with

⁶⁸ Bonfil, *History and Folklore in a Medieval Jewish Chronicle*, 268.

⁶⁹ If our conclusion is correct, the inferences based upon the assumption that a decree was issued and subsequently abrogated should be revisited: such is for instance Starr's presumption that the year 886, in which Basil I died, should be taken as terminus a quo for the dating of the epitaph of the dyer of Corynth—see J. Starr, “The Epitaph of a Dyer in Corynth,” *BNJ* 12 (1936): 42–9.

solicitations of divine favor became more concrete. The Khazar threat on the North and the catalyzing effects of the diplomatic activity of Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut,⁷⁰ the caliph of Cordova, could undoubtedly be interpreted or represented as a looming threat of the Jewish foreign lobby to the security of the empire, and a push to take action.

Only the Eastern frontiers in Asia Minor could provide some optimistic consideration. The clever management of the domestic of the *scholai*, John Kourkouas, in fact an almost independent ruler of the region, offered a good opportunity for a propagandistic enterprise to be set up by managing to represent his agreement to leave the emir of Edessa in peace in exchange for the famous Mandylion. The famous relic was then triumphantly carried into Constantinople on 16 August 944 in a way that may recall the restoration of the True Cross by Heraclius in Jerusalem. The diverging accounts of the story are eloquent examples of how both the supporters of Constantine and Romanus could take advantage of the event for their respective interests, but this aspect of the matter must not attract our attention now: Romanus certainly intended to make a public demonstration of God's favor and His continued protection of the city still shaken by the Rus attack of 941.⁷¹ We can therefore easily imagine mass conversions of Jews as complementary events of the parades organized in that circumstance. On the other hand, it would not come as a surprise that a number of Jews, frightened by the turn that things were taking and attracted by the possibility of finding better conditions of life in the extremely prosperous and appealing Abbasid caliphate, may have made the decision to emigrate.⁷² But again, there is no need to assume that Romanus issued a formal decree of compulsory conversion, of which no evidence whatsoever has survived, beyond hearsay reports of foreign provenience. In addition, the letter Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut had addressed to Helena, may definitely reflect how vague the information in Cordova could be in the immediate aftermath of 944 about the state of affairs in Constantinople. Be that as it may, once the legitimate emperor,

⁷⁰ E. Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, I, (Philadelphia, 1973) 155–227. But see “Gerson Cohen: The Story of the Four Captives,” *PAAJR* 29 (1960–1961): 55–131, 115–9.

⁷¹ Whittow, *Making of Byzantium*, 321, 345.

⁷² Though written some twenty years later, the Genizah letter recently published by J. Holo belongs to the same atmosphere: see J. Holo, “A Genizah Letter from Rhodes Evidently Concerning the Byzantine Reconquest of Crete,” *JNES* 59 (2000): 1–12.

Constantine VII, was finally in possession of full power, things could again resume their usual course.⁷³

If we are right in our reading of the sources, most of the questions we asked following the presupposition that the above-mentioned instances contradict the constant tolerance of the Jews in the socio-economic Christian space, would no longer require answers in the terms that we presumed they should. The constant missionary zeal stimulated by the conventional expectation that the Jews would convert to Christianity could be equally exploited as a strong propagandistic tool in the shaping of the images that the powerful leaders were prompted to spread for an immense variety of possible reasons. Conversions of Jews, especially mass conversions following the abjuration of some influential knowledgeable leader defeated in public debate, were spectacular confirmations of divine favor toward the men or women who promoted them. It was only natural that as such they would be exploited in encomiastic publicity by all kinds of people addressing public opinion, be they chroniclers or hagiographers, for chroniclers at the service of emperors, patriarchs, or bishops did not handle that matter differently than hagiographers seeking to embellish the images of local saints. Reports of such miraculous conversions are indeed standard stuff in *Lives of Saints*, which precisely because of such a trait are commonly suspected of not being really trustworthy.⁷⁴ However, the forced conversion of the Jews never became official government policy.⁷⁵

Should one insist on characterizing the above-mentioned four specific events in terms of continuity or discontinuity, one could conclude that they were both: *extraordinary* expressions of apparent *discontinuity* in the traditional stance of apparent tolerance as well as *ordinary* products of a constantly *prejudiced* attitude toward the Jews. Should one further insist in asking why such *prejudiced* attitude toward the

⁷³ Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 100–1.

⁷⁴ St. Theodotus, bishop of Ancyra, (d. 430) is reported to have converted many Jews (AASS mai t. 4, p. 150 = Fr. di Cavalieri (ed.), *I martirii di S. Theodoto e di S. Ariadne* (Roma, 1901), *Studi e testi* t. 6: 62); St. Anastasius is reported to have converted in ca. 648–649 in Amathus a Jewish youth, brought there as prisoner from Orient (Nau (Ed), “Récits du moine Anastase,” *Oriens Christianus* II: 58–89, III: 56–90). For similar cases in Western Europe, see Toch, *Jews in Europe*, 553 and the bibliography listed there in note 34.

⁷⁵ Contra Toch, *Jews in Europe*, cit. 563–4; and cfr. with the bibliography quoted there in note 92.

Jews did not give way to their removal from the body of the Christian empire, one should seek the answer in the above-mentioned convoluted perception of the relationship of Christianity to Judaism which would require that the Jews spontaneously recognize that the Christians, not them, are the true heirs of the divine gift bestowed upon Israel at Mount Sinai. Proving to the Jews the truth of Christianity was (and apparently still is) a fundamental necessity of the Christian perception of being right. The widely known Augustinian theory of the necessity of Jews and Judaism was just one kind of possible theological approach to the matter, yet among Byzantines was much less known and influential than Maximos's one.

In a sense one can therefore succinctly say that since the Jews constituted a dialogical necessity for the Christians to feel definitely comfortable with their faith, disputation with the Jews was the main road towards the goal. Defeated Jews in the course of such disputations were therefore certain proof of the truth of Christianity, and that was unmistakably conveyed to the public opinion through the eloquent wording of the declarations of abjuration that Jews were asked to pronounce as part of the ritual of conversion.⁷⁶ As long as such ritual would not visibly seal the maturation of the process, Jews should remain in a kind of liminal position in the social fabric of Byzantium, second-rate citizens but nonetheless citizens, potential members of the social body of *us*, yet still not actually full members, therefore not properly *us* but rather *them*.

The public aspect of not being *us* but rather *them* would even in peaceful times arise as an irritating provocation, and consequently cause violent reactions, particularly during periods in which the stubborn determination of the Jews to maintain their distinctive otherness was almost naturally viewed as offensive. Such was of course the period around Easter, and particularly the Sunday of Resurrection, when Christians would address their fellow coreligionists with the traditional formula Χριστὸς ἀνέστη and would expect them to answer ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη. The Jews, who were not part of such an exchange of greetings, were then occasionally considered as overtly denying the divinity of Christ and attracted upon themselves the fury of exalted zealots, let alone bullies who waited for suitable occasions for riots. In such periods it was undoubtedly preferable for Jews to stay home,

⁷⁶ Cfr. Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance" cit. 109-10.

even if legal ordinances did not oblige them to do so. In any case, actual defense of their legal right to live in peace would have been impracticable, for few rulers were capable of adequately punishing the wrongdoers, let alone restoring damaged property. Should one require additional support for such common-sense reasoning, suffice it to recall the convoluted legally minded epistle of Gregory the Great concerning the Jews of Terracina who had been expelled from their synagogue on the pretext that the sound of their singing was audible in the church. But this is not an isolated example of this kind. Other examples of the provocative visibility of the Jews in the Christian space repeatedly refer to the Feast of Tabernacles, which exposed Jewish ritual outside the home.

On the other hand, when confronted with that aspect of Christians not being *us*, especially when that public aspect that was obviously immensely more visible than the correspondent Jewish one, Jews were equally driven to nourish reactions, both defensive and offensive, beyond shaping their own ideas as dialogical rejoinders of the Christian ones and continuously adjusting them according to the specific perceptions of the contingences. No differently than their Christian neighbors, they would thus seek confirmation of their belief in an opposite way: if for the Christians such confirmation would eventually be hallmarked by the conversion of the Jewish adversaries who would finally recognize the superiority of vibrant Christianity vis-à-vis fossilized Judaism, for Jews, successful resistance to Christian temptation would unequivocally imply and prove the superiority of Judaism.

Since in towns where sacred edifices were fixed points of local force used by bishops and clergy whether in accordance or in discordance with the tones of the central font of imperial power and where hagiography became common urban culture, and the interplay of mutual Christian and Jewish attitudes would inevitably be shaped by the perceptible changes of public atmosphere, we may reasonably expect the literary production that constitutes our main source of information to variously reflect this complex nature. A systematic philological analysis of each item of production on both sides of the separating barrier should therefore reveal the threads of the complex network of specific connections with the essential questions of the contextual agendas, in which the "Jewish question" would not necessarily be the most acute one and permit a comparative approach to the findings that have surfaced. Although the work done so far by a number of scholars appears

to open interesting new avenues in this direction, we are still at the beginning of our journey.

For what interests our discussion here and as far as the Jewish side is concerned, it must finally be further noted that the men who authored that literary production were of course nearly the same who were summoned to represent the Jews in the debates orchestrated to promote their conversion, that is to say, the knowledgeable Jewish leaders. These men had independently reached various degrees of intimacy with the non-Jewish elites, at times (though rarely) as formally appointed governmental officials. As a rule, they achieved such intimacy because of valuable professional services that they could provide to the non-Jewish rulers, usually as physicians or diplomats. It stands to reason that their wisdom and knowledge were truly appreciated and did accordingly offer an adequate basis for promoting dialogic cultural relationships. We can call them *courtiers* as their homologues are usually denominated in other places, and not unreasonably assume that they were characterized by the same traits. Notwithstanding the criticism that the familiarity with the non-Jewish elites might occasionally raise among rivals for the leadership, among other things because of the exposure to non-Jewish knowledge deemed necessary to the proper fulfillment of the mediating role between the Jewish sphere and the non-Jewish one, they were normally considered by everybody as the representatives of the Jews and were expected to remain faithful to the group's ideology and to take advantage of their status for the welfare of their fellow religionists. Since the political worldview of medieval Jews constantly advocated faithful subordination and service to the non-Jewish rulers, however hostile, inasmuch as they did not break the rules of the game and attempt to eradicate distinct Jewish survival in their dominions, adequate compliance of the respective commitments on both sides would guarantee the necessary sense of stability to the basic precariousness of Jewish life under non-Jewish rule.

It follows that suspects of inadequate compliance would have negative repercussions on that stability. The proximity of the courtiers to the men and women who were responsible for what was happening inevitably brought about more or less active involvement in the ongoing processes, as advisers and collaborators, carefully read the political map and consequently forecast future developments. In times of political instability resulting from conflicts among the ruling elites, courtiers driven by their idiosyncratic proclivities to support or attack one of the parties, might make wrong evaluations and decisions that could

result in disaster: the stereotypical demonic character of the image of the stubborn Jews, already portrayed in the Gospels, and mentioned above with reference to the iconoclastic policy of Leo III, would then revitalize dormant anti-Jewish feelings and prompt anti-Jewish action; the diplomatic services of the Jews, normally accomplished through connections with Jewish courtiers at the service of foreign rulers, with whom epistolary communication could easily be carried out in Hebrew, would accordingly nourish suspicions of betrayal, which may have happened in the last years of the reign of Romanus Lekapenus; and so on and so forth. Active participation in ongoing Byzantine rivalries could of course also occur, though to a lesser extent and on less sophisticated levels, by the common people; and yet, we can hardly be surprised that the surviving evidence, as a rule authored by knowledgeable men belonging to the upper echelons of Jewish society, remains conveniently silent on such occurrences, however numerous and detrimental they may have been. Be that as it may, the history of the Jews in medieval Islam and Western Christendom displays numerous examples of such occurrences followed by disasters. The history of the Jews of Byzantium cannot have developed differently. And in times of danger, the drive to accentuate the perception of *them* not being *us* could only be exasperated. Jews could then quite naturally be perceived as dangerous frightening outsiders doomed to join the enemies and cause disaster, no matter what Jewish behavior may actually have been.

And yet, all in all, the stability of Jewish life in medieval Byzantium was not crucially jeopardized during the entire period under consideration here. The Jews did accordingly actively participate in the socio-economic and cultural development of Byzantium, as much as legal ordinances or other kinds of hindrances did not dissuade them from doing so. Most of the essays included in this volume will hopefully adequately substantiate our conclusion.

SURVIVAL IN DECLINE: ROMANIOTE JEWRY POST-1204*

Steven Bowman

The Jewish communities of Byzantium entered the thirteenth Christian century with trepidation, repressed anger, and messianic hopes. It was the beginning of a transitional period that lasted three centuries and included three stages. The first was the Crusader invasion in 1204 and dismemberment of the empire. The succeeding Palaeologan period (1258–1453) turned out to be one of continuity and discontinuity, as evidenced in three distinctive areas: the political history of Byzantium, its changing attitudes towards its non-Orthodox populations, and the cultural story of the Romaniote Jews. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed the rise of the Ottoman sultanate, whose conquest of Constantinople completed the period of transition in the Balkans until the emergence of national states in the nineteenth century. Despite the significant changes that the Byzantine rulers and the minorities in the empire, including the Romaniote Jews, would undergo by the end of the period, the challenges and responses that characterize them throughout follow similar patterns, as outlined below.

In the more than half century since Joshua Starr's pioneering *Romania: The Jewries of the Levant after the Fourth Crusade*, a significant number of studies have explored the Jews in the Latin and Palaeologan periods.¹ These studies have broadened in depth with the appearance of specialists in the social and economic history of the Jews, the relations between Rabbinates and Karaites, the intellectual encounter of Jews with Byzantine philosophy and other aspects of the intellectual

* At the outset we should note that in the many areas of the Byzantine Balkans controlled by non-Byzantine governments, the culture and language remained Byzantine Orthodox. So too for the Jews who were predominantly Romaniotes and who continued their own Balkan Greek and Palestinian traditions in former Byzantine areas. Hence our discussion will treat the area as one oecumenum, or as Dimitri Obololsky called the broader area, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500–1453* (London, 1971).

¹ J. Starr, *Romania: The Jewries of the Levant after the Fourth Crusade* (Paris, 1949). Since 1987 there has been continued monitoring of an increasing volume of studies in the *Bulletin of Judaeo-Greek Studies*, edited by N. de Lange et al. and published semi-annually at Cambridge University [henceforth BJGS].

history of all the Jews in the empire, the Balkan chapter in the emergence of Jewish mysticism and kabbalah, as well as the Byzantine prolegomenon to Ottoman Jewry. All of these studies have considerably enhanced the material available for further study of this transitional period. In addition, the phenomenon of immigration, the reception of various waves of Ashkenazim and Sephardim, and their subsequent acculturation to the Greek Orthodox milieu is only beginning to be plumbed and has yet to be integrated into the complexity of Balkan history during this period.

Written as a sequel to Starr's earlier survey of Byzantine Jewish history and presentation of the source material, Steven Bowman's *The Jews of Byzantium, 1204-1453* provided a framework for the period 1204-1453 that is now being filled in by specialists in a wide variety of disciplines.² Bowman's attempt was the first to correlate the emerging material with recent developments in Late Byzantine Studies (which had then emerged as a major discipline) and to chart the settlement pattern of Jews following the Fourth Crusade of 1204. Starr had already provided a survey of Jewish life in Crete under the Venetians, which is being supplemented primarily in the extensive oeuvre of David Jacoby (see below).³

The period 1204-1453 witnessed at the start the fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire from 1204-1209, followed by increasing constriction and concomitant weakening of the political and military power of the emperor and the state. Borders remained constantly in flux in both the Balkans and Anatolia throughout the period. Three Byzantine rump states appeared in Epiros, Nicaea, and Trebizond. Crusader kingdoms appeared in Constantinople, Thessalonike, Mistra (all returned to the Palaeologan dynasty by 1261), and later in the fourteenth century in Athens and Thebes. Bulgarian and Serbian leaders also established ephemeral states. In addition, the Venetians and Genoese established their control over numerous islands and cities, in particular Negropont, Crete, Coron, and Modon for the former and Chios for the latter. At the same time a new and vigorous entity, the expanding Ottoman sultanate, emerged during the fourteenth and

² J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire 641-1204* (Athens, 1939); S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium, 1204-1453* (University of Alabama Press, 1985, paperback reprint New York, 2000).

³ J. Starr, "Jewish Life in Crete under the Rule of Venice," *PAAJR* XII (1942): 59-114.

fifteenth centuries to complete the reunification of the Balkans and later Anatolia with the conquest of Constantinople [to be renamed Istanbul from the Greek *eis tin Polin* (to the City)] at the end of the period. The dominant languages of the Balkans shifted during our period from Greek and Latin (and locally Italian via Venetian, and Spanish via Catalan and Navarese bootlegging companies) to Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, while the masses would continue their native languages preserved by their religious affiliations (e.g., Slavic, Armenian, Hebrew, and of course Greek). The ruling dynasties would shift from Orthodox and Catholic to Muslim, each married to a multi-ethnic bevy of women; the army in turn would shift from Christian mercenaries (Balkan and Scandinavian) to *devşirme* Christians from the Balkans. Hence, if we follow patterns, the system remains, *mutatis mutandis*, relatively similar to the complexities introduced after the conquest of the empire in 1204.

The Jewish story was, as to be expected, much affected by these developments in the wider world. The fragmentation of the Balkans with their new political realities necessitated a linguistic and cultural adjustment to the continually changing novel realities that faced them. Yet Romaniote Jewry, as the local heir to the rich tradition of Hellenistic language and culture came to be called, persevered, even as their demographic mass declined through plague and emigration. These Romaniotes, Greek-speaking subjects of Byzantium, served a transitional pedagogic role for immigrant Jews from the Latin Christian West in transferring the intellectual heritage of Byzantine culture. At the same time they preserved a demotic Greek predominance that paralleled the Church's successful policy of missionizing the immigrating *ethni* during the Middle Byzantine period. The surviving scholars of the declining Romaniote community and its autochthonous traditions (flourishing at least since the second century B.C.E.) interacted as well with their contemporary non-Jewish intellectuals until both groups were superseded by immigrant Sephardim and the emerging Muslim ulema.

The cultural contributions of Romaniote Jewry to the emerging communities of Eastern Europe are generally unrecognized by modern scholarship. We shall explore later several aspects of this influence as it has been unveiled by research during the past generation. At the same time we should note that this influence parallels the contributions of Greek Orthodoxy to what has been described as a Byzantine Commonwealth, namely the religious and intellectual influence of the

Byzantine Church upon the Orthodox world of the Slavs. This spread of Byzantine Jewish and Christian influence to the emerging centers of Slavic Eastern Europe is an important legacy of the mediaeval period. While the Christian influence has been recognized for generations among Byzantinists, that of the Jews has yet to be incorporated into the continuum of Jewish history which is dominated by studies of Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and Mustariba communities, despite important work that has been done on Byzantine southern Italian and Balkan Romaniotes.

The discontinuity in the story of the Jews in Palaeologan Byzantium is evidenced in the reversal of the previous periods of Christian imperial harshness towards them which had witnessed the reduction of Jews to a second-class citizenship expressed within a religiously articulated contempt that all but ostracized Jews from participation in the public life of the Christian majority. In contrast, the eleventh- and twelfth-century experience under the Komnenoi emperors was a period of expansion of settlement and the integration of new Jewish immigrants, in particular the Karaites. While the thirteenth-century period of political and territorial fragmentation saw a brief return to occasional 'nationalist' persecutions, the succeeding centuries under the Palaeologoi witnessed a stability of relations between the government and its Jewish minority based on the restrictive laws of previous codes, although possibly observed in the breach. At the same time new opportunities opened for Jews, especially those who succeeded in gaining the protection of foreign powers. These latter developments raised the ire of the Church, the protector of Orthodoxy and the arbiter of Christian society. As the economic situation of the Jews fared better through a more tolerant government policy beset by the increasing stress of internal and external pressures, the Church increased its traditional denigrating competition with the Jews in the face of the developing dangers to Christian society from Latin Catholicism and Ottoman Islam.

The discontinuity then is represented by the shift from the earlier period in the attitudes of church and state. While the emperors of the Middle Byzantine period enforced baptism on their Jewish citizens and the church stood in the breach to demand their right of religious self-expression according to Roman law, in the Palaeologan period we find the emperors protecting the commercial rights of their Jewish citizens against the inroads of Genoa and Venice and those Jews who succeeded in coming under the respective protection of the Italian maritime

republics. Indeed, this shift from a strong domestic Romaniote Jewish economy to one in which Jews (many also Romaniote) under the protection of the Italian merchant cities became predominant represents a significant realignment of the traditional role of Romaniote Jews in the empire. This realignment persisted into the Ottoman period.⁴ The church, on the other hand, reverted to the earlier hostility preserved in the Church Fathers, and this reversal occurred for reasons of its own self-identity.

I. CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY IN SETTLEMENT

The availability of more and better literary sources, though sparse indeed, suggests a continuity of Jewish settlement, despite historical vicissitudes including the general decline in population in the Mediterranean regions in the fourteenth century. The limited material sheds light on a wider range of commercial settlements alongside many of the earlier known sites, some of which apparently disappeared for unknown reasons. We may also note continued immigration into the Balkans and the Aegean region by Italian, Spanish, and increasingly Ashkenazi Jews. Concomitantly, Romaniote Jews migrated north where their influence can be found in southern Germany and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, particularly in the areas of synagogue art and textiles.⁵ Additionally, the rise of new centers of imperial authority attracted Jewish settlement, e.g., Ioannina and Mistra. Even so, the Jewish population post-1204 is unlikely to have matched estimates from the period of Benjamin of Tudela.⁶ For example, if we compare the settlement before and after the man-eating plague of the mid-fourteenth century

⁴ The Sephardi exiles enjoyed a more favored legal status than the Romaniotes under the Ottomans. The latter new situation was not superseded in Greece until the destruction of the Sephardi mercantile centers during World War II.

⁵ Note the motifs on the south German synagogue in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem reproduced in N. de Lange, *Atlas of the Jewish World* (New York, 1984).

⁶ In his *Karaites in Byzantium: The Formative Years, 970-1100* (New York, 1959), Zvi Ankori has argued that the number of Byzantine Jews in the twelfth century was equal to or slightly exceeded the combined Jewish demography of Egypt and Syria, but the former left no genizah to compete with that of the Islamic Mediterranean as represented in the Cairo Genizah so excellently plumbed by S. D. Goitein, Moshe Gil, and their students. Ankori estimates the Byzantine Jewish population in the late twelfth century at approximately 75,000 (Salo Baron is even more optimistic at 100,000). At the other end of the scale Joshua Starr (and David Jacoby) read Benjamin of Tudela's figures quite conservatively and estimate the Byzantine Jewish population at less than

(beginning in 1348 and subsequently endemic), we can suggest some possible changes in settlement patterns. Benjamin of Tudela traveled through the empire on a commercial route that bypassed a number of inland Balkan settlements and all the Anatolian communities. A few other sites are mentioned in the pre-1204 documents.⁷ Our most significant source for the post plague period is the list of *sürgün* communities in Istanbul that dates from the seventeenth century.⁸ That list includes all the communities in the Balkans and Anatolia transferred to Constantinople after 1453 as part of the Ottoman policy to rebuild the capital from territories conquered by 1455 [and so not including the Despotate of the Peloponnesos with its capital of Mistra and the Black Sea emporium of Trebizond]. Hence, based on our two major sources and ancillary references, we can only tentatively suggest a significant decline in the number of Romaniote Jews on the one hand (paralleling a general demographic decline), and the disappearance from the sources of many earlier communities in favor of the rise of new centers in the last century of the empire on the other.

II. VICISSITUDES OF THE CAPITAL AND ITS JEWS

The near destruction of the Empire in 1204 stemmed from *stasis* [i.e., civil strife], a danger that Josephus had warned against in his perennially popular histories of the Jews, a danger that Constantine Porphyrogennitos had highlighted in his tenth-century encyclopedia known as *Excerpta historica*.⁹ For the two decades prior to the Fourth Crusade, Constantinople had been beset by coup and counter-coup beginning with the massacre of Latin residents in the capital in 1182 that was subsequently avenged with the massacre in Thessalonike by William of Sicily. The strife between the pro-Western (Manuel) and

9000. On population estimates for the Palaeologan period, see my *Jews of Byzantium*, 190–195 and the bibliography cited in the following notes.

⁷ These are listed in my *Jews in Byzantium* and discussed in detail by Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*.

⁸ U. Heyd, "The Jewish Communities of Istanbul in the Seventeenth Century," *Oriens*, IV (1953): 299–314; See H. Inalcik, "The Policy of Mehmed I toward the Greek Population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Buildings of the City," *DOP* 23 (1969): 229–49.

⁹ See my "Josephus in Byzantium," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, eds. L. Feldman and G. Hata. (Detroit, 1987), 362–85 with appropriate bibliography.

anti-Western (Andronikos I) Komnenoi was followed by civil strife among the usurping noble family of Angelos (Isaac was dethroned by his brother Alexios III in 1201 and then reinstated with his son Alexios IV in 1203 by the army of the Fourth Crusade). The machinations involved Western leaders (Philip of Swabia and Boniface of Montferat with the proactive counsel of the Venetian Doge Henry Dandolo) and led to the invited intervention resulting in the barbarous conquest of Zara as partial payment for the debt the Crusaders had contracted with the Venetians for transport to the Holy Land. In the course of the ensuing two years accelerating animosity between the Orthodox and the Catholics erupted in actual fighting in 1203 after the usurpation of Alexios V and led to the rape of the Byzantine capital.¹⁰

Among the events that accompanied this devastation, the Crusaders set fire to the Jewish Quarter in Pera located across the Golden Horn, where both Rabbanites and Karaites were quartered. The location of the Jewish Quarter raises questions about the settlement of the Jews in Constantinople: were the Jews restricted to specific quarters? Or did they have access to non-Jewish sections, the latter a reflection of their vocational and religious diaspora?¹¹ The point of departure for the later period is the seminal source of Benjamin of Tudela who visited Constantinople (ca. 1168), shortly before the Byzantine attack on the Western merchants that further exacerbated the tensions between Greeks and Franks. He describes the Jews of Pera, the site of the tanners and the silk merchants, the poor and the rich. He also notes the division between Rabbinates and Karaites who lived in adjacent quarters separated by a fence. The latter separation was necessitated by the violence engendered through calendar disputes between the Rabbanites and the Karaites, a tension that continued throughout the Palaeologan period, at least in Constantinople. Jews appear in both Constantinople proper and Pera in the Palaeologan period, and are also recorded in

¹⁰ For the Western perspective, see J. Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople* (New York, 2004); for the Byzantine view, see M. Angold, *The Fourth Crusade: Event and Context* (Harlow, 2003). For a detailed third view, see D. E. Queller and T. F. Madden, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, 1997). For a local perspective, see the summary by J. Barker, "Late Byzantine Thessalonike: Challenges and Responses," *DOP* 57 (2003): 12–4.

¹¹ Both Zvi Ankori (*Karaites in Byzantium*, passim) and David Jacoby (below note 13) have discussed the Crusader and other long known sources on the location of the Jewish Quarters in the capital.

Turkish sources in the trans-Bosphoros suburbs.¹² Jews had been a feature of the population of Constantinople since its establishment as the Christian capital of Constantine's new realm, and perhaps even earlier, though there are no inscriptions to this effect and too few sources for the pre-Palaeologue period.¹³ While Byzantine ecclesiastics inveighed against their presence in various quarters, nonetheless no official policy was extant that relegated Jews to a specific locale. Moreover, they had already since the Komnenian period, if not earlier, owned and rented property in various sections of the city.¹⁴ Evidence from the Palaeologan period locates in the Vlanka Quarter close by the Church of Saint John Prodromos a Jewish tannery, recently established by the emperor, whose spiritual and occupational stink was offensive to the monk Maximos Planudes.¹⁵ The Vlanka Quarter, formerly the Eleutherios Quarter, had its own small harbor, and a palace of Andronikos I Komnenos. If Planudes is to be taken as a reliable witness, then we have evidence of an imperial sponsored Jewish tannery in the city proper. David Jacoby has argued that all the indeterminate references to a Jewish Quarter (*Hebraïke*) during the Paleologue period can be applied to the Vlanka Quarter and hence it should be considered as the main Byzantine Jewish settlement in the city. Jews were also to be found within the Cafacalea district of the Venetian Quarter inside the city proper as well as in Pera, that is, across the Golden Horn in the area of the former Judaica, where Andronikos II settled the Genoese merchants.

¹² For Karaite settlements, see my *Jews in Byzantium*, 60. See below for Jews in Nicaea during the thirteenth century.

¹³ See Jacoby, "La population de Constantinople à l'époque byzantine: un problème de démographie urbaine," *Byzantion* XXXI (1961): 81–109; and his "Les quartiers juifs de Constantinople à l'époque Byzantine," *Byzantion* XXXVII (1967): 167–227; and subsequent treatment in his collected articles, e.g., *Byzantium, Latin Romania and the Mediterranean* (Variorum Collected Studies Series, 2001); see my essay in *CJH* IV.

¹⁴ See Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, s.v. "real estate."

¹⁵ *Maximi monachis Planudis epistulae*, ed. P. A. M. Leone (Amsterdam, 1991), no. 31: 62ff; see K. Matschke, "Construction Workers and Building Activity in Late Byzantine Constantinople," in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. N. Necipoğlu (Leiden, 2001), 318f; Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, no. 31; D. Jacoby, "Benjamin of Tudela in Byzantium," in *Essays presented to Ihor Sevcenko on his Eightieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students*, eds. P. Schreiner and O. Strakhov (Cambridge, 2002), 180–5, = *Palaeoslavica*, 10/1 (2002). Benjamin of Tudela had somewhat similarly castigated the Jewish tanners of Pera.

III. PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS DURING THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE EMPIRE

As noted above, the Roman (Byzantine) Empire of the Komnenoi and the Angeloi fragmented during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries into a number of ephemeral Greek, Latin, Serbian, and Bulgarian states. These antagonistic entities, weakened by internecine struggles that reflected religious and national animosities, were swallowed up by the growing power of the Osmanli *ghazis* over the next two and a half centuries. Michael Angelos Dukas Komnenos, the Despot of Epiros, was succeeded by Theodore who destroyed the Latin Kingdom of Salonica in 1224 and was subsequently crowned Emperor of the Romans. In 1230 Theodore was captured by John Asen II, the Tsar of Bulgaria, who had him blinded. After the tsar's death in 1241, much of southern Bulgaria was absorbed by John Vatzes, who had already created a powerful and viable center of Hellenism in Nicaea and reconquered Thessalonike from his rival in Epiros. The desultory Latin Empire of Constantinople and its appendages in the Peloponnesos [the latter ceded by the "Ladies Parliament" in return for the release of their captured Crusader husbands] fell by 1261 to Michael Palaeologos, who had usurped the throne of his child emperor John IV in 1258. The Despotate of Morea with its capital Mistra was assigned to a junior member of the Palaeologan family where a Greek Orthodox culture flourished until its conquest in 1460. Trebizond became in 1204 the capital of the Grand Komnenos and Emperor until 1461, the last Greek survivor of the period of fragmentation.

We have only a few echoes of the treatment accorded the Jews in the struggling Greek states of Epiros and Nicaea. In his polemical letter to his relative Pablo Christiani written about 1270, Jacob ben Elia lists a number of persecutions suffered by Jews in the thirteenth century.¹⁶ Two of these concern the Byzantine east. The first incident accuses Theodore, presumably after his conquest of Thessalonike and subsequent coronation as emperor, of depredating the Jews and extorting money from them, the latter action no doubt connected with his planned campaigns to the north against Bulgaria. Jacob's letter adds

¹⁶ See *Jews of Byzantium*, s.v. for bibliography; A. Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the XIII Century," *Bar Ilan Annual* XIV-XV (1977): 61-72 [reprinted in his *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium* (Bar Ilan, 1995), 148-59].

the story of Theodore's blinding but inserts the tsar's demand that two of the Jews in his entourage perform the punishment in revenge for his arrogance and persecution. When the Jews refused, the tsar, according to Jacob, ordered them killed.¹⁷ The letter continues with the claim that John Vatatzes forcibly converted the Jews in his realm. Such a policy is reminiscent of the forced baptisms of the Middle Byzantine period and is in accordance with the highly charged nationalist fervor of this church-centered realm.¹⁸ The source does not give much background to the latter persecution and so Joshua Starr, who discussed the passage against the backdrop of the 1930s and 1940s, suggested a nationalist background to the persecution.¹⁹ Perhaps Starr's suggestion is better illuminated against the broader canvas of events unfolding in Asia Minor in the mid-thirteenth century.

IV. MESSIANIC HOPES

These events in Epiros and Nicaea, including the earlier capture of Constantinople (New Rome) in 1204, the Mongol menace (from the 1240s), the Mamluk threat to the Crusader states (from the 1260s), and perhaps the contemporary rise of the Assassins, were all capable of stimulating a messianic fervor among the Jews of the East Mediterranean regions. The synagogue poetry of the Romaniotes throughout the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries indeed is replete with traditional and contemporary messianic allusions. Despite the evidence in their *mahzorim* and other sources, no study to date examines whether there was an upsurge of messianic expectation and activity among Byzantine Jewry during the thirteenth century. Did the Crusader conquest and rape of Constantinople, the Virgin-protected city, recall for Romaniote scholars the Talmudic dictum about the fall of Rome precipitating the arrival of the messiah in a manner similar to some Jewish responses when the city was taken by the Ottomans in the fifteenth century?

¹⁷ The geography of the scene described in a series of biblical quotes perhaps fits Siderokastro: dropped from a height into deep water.

¹⁸ Source and bibliography in *Jews of Byzantium*, no. 24

¹⁹ Fourteenth-century Byzantine *paytanim* lament the trials of Israel under Byzantine persecution. Regrettably the events alluded to cannot be dated. See L. Weinberger, *Anthology of Hebrew Poetry in Greece, Anatolia and the Balkans* (Cincinnati, 1975), 13 (English section), 14f (Hebrew). See his *Jewish Hymnography: A Literary History* (London, 1998), *passim*.

Western sources are clear that Byzantine Jews were in a state of messianic expectation due to the Mongol threat in the 1240s and 1250s.²⁰ Whether this was a reflection of the West's perception of the Devil's Horsemen, as Christian sources described the Mongol hordes, or drawn from Jewish tradition is unknown due to the near absence of contemporary Jewish sources.²¹ A clear indication of messianic activity among Byzantine Jews under Latin control is found in an anonymous letter from ca. 1257 (or slightly later) that mentions the recent impact of the Mongol advance propaganda among the Jews of Morea and specifically mentions Andravida, capital of the Crusader Principality of Achaia in the Peloponnesus, which is otherwise unattested as a Jewish center.²²

If the above hints are indicative of a messianic excitement among Byzantine Jews, it is unlikely that such an atmosphere was unknown to the Church and the emperor in Nicaea, who would have been understandably concerned about the potential negative impact of such phenomena among the Christian population. A rescue of the Jews by the 'Lost Tribes of Israel,' as the Mongols were occasionally described, would obviate a fundamental principle of Christian supersession (based on the Church's reading of Genesis 49:10).²³ Hence the policy of forced conversion attributed to John Vatatzes would have a more practical interpretation than merely 'nationalist' in the highly charged atmosphere of mid-thirteenth-century Anatolia as was suggested by Starr.²⁴ Following the death of the emperor, his son Theodore, who

²⁰ See comments of Matthew of Paris in *The Jews of Byzantium*, 80 note 82.

²¹ L. Weinberger has published several volumes of *piyyutim* from the Balkan and Aegean regions that contain *piyyutim* with messianic allusions. See, for example, his *Bulgaria's Synagogue Poets: The Kastoreans* (Cincinnati, 1983), 15f for the twelfth century.

²² See my "Messianic Expectations in the Peloponnesos," *HUCA*, LII (1981): 195–202 and comments in *Jews of Byzantium*, 79f and document no. 21. A date a few years later is also a possibility. Within a few years Abraham Abulafia made the first of several visits to nearby Patras, although his overall reaction to the Mongol phenomenon has not been clarified. The mention of three Jewish leaders indicates, *pace* Benjamin of Tudela, a fairly large community of at least 50 Jews (or families).

²³ See A. Poznanski, *Schiloh. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Messiaslehre*. Erster Teil (Leipzig, 1904). The disturbances in Thessalonike attending the rumors of the First Crusade in the reign of Alexios I may have been recalled by the emperor or his court (see Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, s.v.).

²⁴ David Jacoby has cogently argued that the destruction of Constantinople's industrial area by the Crusaders in 1203 stimulated a migration of silk workers, both Christian and Jewish, to Nicaea where they reestablished their skilled manufactories that remained even during the Palaeologan period. See his "The Jews and the Silk Industry

retook the family name of Laskaris, presumably continued his father's policy among his Jewish population. His young son John was blinded by Michael Palaeologos, who represented the return of the landed aristocracy to power. Jacob's observation about the blinding reflects an understanding of the Byzantine qualifications for a political or religious leader who fulfills the biblical criteria for sacral purity.

V. A NEW ERA IN THE CAPITAL

With the ascendancy of Michael Palaeologos to the throne in 1258, the persecutions ended, according to Jacob's letter, which puts into the new emperor's mouth the promise of the new period: "Well I know that Vatatzes oppressed you, therefore he was not successful. Now go and worship the Lord your God, you and your sons and daughters. Keep my commands and bless me also and ever ask my peace and well being. I will protect you and you will keep silent." This statement, whether based on fact or assembled from appropriate biblical verses to convince Pablo Christiani of the error of his missionary agenda, represents a return to the responsibilities of the earliest Roman emperors who allowed a special relationship with the Jews since the days of Julius Caesar. Given the numerous internal and external enemies who challenged Michael's reign and policies, such an appeal to a beleaguered group that could be of financial assistance is not an impossibility. True, there were restrictive laws against the Jews enshrined in the law codes,²⁵ yet the arbitrary persecution of the intense nationalist

of Constantinople," in *Byzantium, Latin Romania and the Mediterranean*, XI, 18f. This would account for a greater presence of Jews in Nicaea, a lone physical survival of which is a tombstone immured in the wall of the city (see A. Schneider, *Die Römischen und Byzantinischen Denkmäler von İznik-Nicaea* (Berlin, 1943), 36f. For evidence from earlier periods, see S. Fine with L. V. Rutgers, "New Light on Judaism in Asia Minor during Late Antiquity: Two Recently Identified Inscribed Menorahs," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996): 1–23 and his "A 'New' Menorah from Turkey: New Light on Jews in Asia Minor during the Roman-Byzantine Period," *Qadmoniot* 31/ 2 (1998): 123–5 (Hebrew).

²⁵ The *Syntagma* of Matthew Blastares of 1335 summarizes for his and subsequent generations in the Empire and Serbia many of the restrictions on Jews in earlier Church councils while the limited summary of imperial laws in the *Hexabiblos* of George Harmenopoulos suggests a pro forma statement of liabilities, e.g., prohibition of Jewish testimony against a Christian, punishment of a Christian convert to Judaism, death penalty for circumcising a Christian, or perverting the Christian faith [*Jews of Byzantium*, no. 55 and no. 62].

periods of siege mentality had ended and did not return during the increasing pressures on the survival of the state from Ottoman attacks during the last dynasty of the empire.

While the historian can take a broader view that is composed in *la longue durée* and argue for a better attitude toward the Jews of the Palaeologan period, nonetheless the denigrated state of Jews within a Christian world was manifested in the hostility of the church and among the general populace as well as inscribed in the law codes. The latter aspect of the reality within which Jews lived is plainly discernible among the plethora of *paytanim* and *darshanim* of the last centuries of Byzantium. Examples from the former are evident already in the Komnenoi period while the numerous references among the later Romaniote *paytanim* find support in the recent treatment of the longest manuscript of sermons that echoes the popular Jewish response to the Christian majority.²⁶

Michael's son Andronikos II reigned for nearly fifty years (1282–1328), a period that saw the precipitous decline of an empire that had, under his father, successfully manipulated Mediterranean politics for twenty years following Vatatzes's successes in Anatolia and the Balkans. The successes of these two earlier leaders restored the Byzantines to local and international prestige; however, their policies contained the seeds for the subsequent decline under the weak leadership of Andronikos II. In addition to loss of international influence, the empire's domestic economy continued to fragment; the empire now supported the Genoese who had replaced the Venetians as the arbiters of Aegean and Black Sea commerce. Catholic freebooters from the Iberian Peninsula (the Grand Catalan Company 1311–1388) set up a robber state in mainland Greece until expelled by a Peloponnesian baron (Nerio Acciaiuoli) who in turn soon became a vassal of the Ottomans in 1415.²⁷ By the end of Andronikos's reign the Ottomans (as the *ghazis* of Ertughrul's successor Osman came to be called) were established as the dominant power on the Bithynian littoral of Asia Minor. Internally the monks rose to power and influence and here the continuation of Michael's tolerance to Jews [and also Armenians by his successor] met a strong challenge from the church. The comments

²⁶ M. Saperstein and E. Kanarfogel, "A Byzantine Manuscript (Sermons: A Description and Selection about Prayer and the Synagogue)," *Peamim* 78 (1999): 164–84.

²⁷ See W. Miller, *The Latins in the Levant: A History of Frankish Greece (1204–1566)* (London, 1908; reprint 1964) and *CMH*, vol. IV.

of Maximos Planudes are amplified by his patriarch Athanasios who castigated the Emperor Andronikos for his toleration of Armenians, Muslims, and Jews which allowed them excessive influence in the capital. More specifically, charges of Judaizing were laid against a certain Chionios in Thessalonike, charges that apparently arose out of the latter's mediation on behalf of the Jews, a parallel to the alleged actions of an official called Kokalas in the capital.²⁸ The circumstances do not identify these officials nor the particular Jews involved in the alleged scandal. At the very least, the fact that some of the individuals involved were from the despised minority characterizes the hostile generalizations of the ecclesiastics.

VI. THESSALONIKE

The chaos in Byzantium stemming from the fragmentation of the empire can be seen most readily in the vicissitudes of Thessalonike during the fourteenth century.²⁹ While the "second city" of Byzantium has been the subject of scholarly attention in recent years, the question arises whether there was a continuity of settlement between the twelfth century, as described by Benjamin of Tudela, and the Ottoman conquest of the city in 1430. An answer to this question may also illuminate the intellectual life of Jews within their own cultural heritage as well as relations with their Christian neighbors. The only direct evidence for Jews in the city comes from the colophon of the scribe Adoniah Kalomiti who identifies himself as the son of his teacher, the scholar Aba Kalomiti. The latter bears the same family name as David Kalomiti, also designated as a scholar but who is better known as the *parnas* [leader or *rosh*] of Egripon (Chalkis) whose difficulties with the Theban immigrants of the Galimidi family in the first decades of the fourteenth century eventually reached the court of the Venetian bailo whose decision was appealed to the papacy for adjudication.³⁰

²⁸ *Jews of Byzantium*, 38f; A. Sharf, "Jews, Armenians and the Patriarch Athanasios I," *Bar Ilan Annual XVI-XVII* (1979): 31-48 [reprinted in his *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium*, 269-286].

²⁹ See J. Barker, "Late Byzantine Thessalonike: Challenges and Responses," *DOP* 57(2003): 5-33. See too D. Jacoby, "Foreigners and the Urban Economy in Thessalonike, ca. 1150-ca. 1450," *ibid.*, 85-132.

³⁰ See D. Jacoby, "Venice, the Inquisition and the Jewish Communities of Crete in the Early 14th century," *Studi veneziani XII* (1970): 127-44; reprinted in his collected

Adoniah spent the week after Passover in the spring of 1329 in Salonika, copying a commentary on Moses Maimonides by Zerahiah ben Isaac ben Shealtiel Barcinonensis. Other Kalomitis were to be found in Crete, attesting to the spread of the clan. The father of the polymath and *paytan* Shlomo Sharbit haZahav bears the epithet Eliahu mi-Salonikiyo (i.e., from Salonika) and is possibly dated to the late fourteenth century. The peregrinations of the father and his son are another indication of the freedom of movement of Romaniote Jews both within and from Byzantine enclaves to Turkic territories during these transitional centuries. The son was apparently born in Byzantine Morea and flourished in the Anatolian city of Ephesus, now under Turkic control and called Efes, after 1426. His career bears interesting parallels to the Byzantine polymath George Chrysokokkos, whose name coincidentally translates into Hebrew as *sharbit hazahav*.³¹ About the same time we find a peripatetic Sephardi scribe Shem Tov ben Ya'akov ibn Polia who copied mystical texts in a number of Balkan cities.³²

VII. MYSTICAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Late Byzantine period preserves a plethora of extant manuscripts of *piyyut*, kabbalah, philosophy, and Karaitica. The Institute for Hebrew Manuscripts at the National Library in Jerusalem along with its corollary Center for their analytical description under the direction of Malakhi Beit Arie is the central repository for future research into later Byzantine intellectual life. In simple calculation we may state, as Beit Arie has averred in private conversation, that the quantity of late Byzantine/Romaniote texts (thirteenth to sixteenth centuries) outnumbers any other geographical or linguistic tradition. Colette Sirat in her recent handbook of Hebrew manuscripts has recognized the importance of the Byzantine corpus by fully integrating this material into her detailed analysis.³³ Moshe Idel once confirmed my suspicions about the plethora

articles *Recherches sur la Méditerranée orientale du XII au XV^e siècle* (London, 1970). Translation of the letter is available in Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, no. 30.

³¹ See *Jews of Byzantium*, 147n for bibliography.

³² The career of Shem Tov ben Ya'akov ibn Polia has been outlined in my "Who wrote *Sefer haKaneh* and *Sefer haPeliah*," (Hebrew) *Tarbiz* (Summer 1985): 150–2. See below.

³³ C. Sirat, *Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*, edited and translated by N. de Lange (Cambridge, 2002).

of pre-Sephardi Balkan kabbalistic manuscripts by averring that their totality exceeded those of Spain and Ashkenaz combined. Hence, while the material is recognized as available, there is yet to appear a younger generation of scholars to tap into this veritable sea of material. Apparently Leon Weinberger's numerous forays into the Romaniote and Karaite *piyyut* tradition of the late medieval Balkans will stand as a seminal pioneering effort for another generation.³⁴

Abraham Abulafia, whose sojourns in Greece in the latter third of the thirteenth century netted but a few disciples, none of whom were apparently worthy of their rabbi's commendation, emphasized the necessity to master Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* as a preliminary stage to the higher levels of mysticism that he espoused and taught.³⁵ Hence the interest in Maimonides [Rambam, 1135–1202] may link the above-mentioned commentary of Zerachiah Barcinonences to Abulafia's legacy in the Balkans. In his seminal dissertation Moshe Idel analyzed the documentary material for Abraham Abulafia's sojourns in the post-Byzantine Morea (Patras, Thebes, etc.).³⁶ As has long been known, his wife came from Patras which likely accounts for his continued visits to Greece. Though Idel subsequently published the theoretical aspects of his studies on Abulafia, his manuscript researches in the area of Abulafia's Balkan legacy remain unpublished as does the huge corpus of kabbalistic commentary written in the former Byzantine Balkans.³⁷ It may be that some of the cryptic allusions in Abulafia's prophecies should be understood against a Byzantine background. However, no attempt has yet been made to historicize his elliptical statements.

Among the kabbalists, Elnatan ben Moses Kalkes (perhaps from Kilkis north of Salonika) wrote his lengthy kabbalistic treatise, *Eben Saphir*, apparently in Constantinople in the latter fourteenth century.

³⁴ Most recently summarized in L. Weinberger, *Jewish Hymnography: A Literary History* (Cambridge, 1998).

³⁵ In his *Sefer Eden Ganuz* Abulafia gives a list of students from Spain to Greece to whom he taught Maimonides's text: ten in Thebes and four in Negropont (Euripo) (see following note p. 8).

³⁶ "Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine" PhD Thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1976. His *Sefer Ha-Yashar*, the first of Abulafia's books on prophecy, was written in Patras in 1279 (cf. *Jews of Byzantium*, 13, no. 26). Morea became the name for the Peloponnesus and Boeotia during the late Byzantine and Ottoman periods.

³⁷ As noted above, Idel has indicated in private conversation that the corpus of Byzantine kabbalistic manuscripts exceeds the combined total extant from Sepharad and Ashkenaz. Much of this corpus remains unstudied. See below.

This is one of the lengthiest manuscripts extant from Byzantium (ca. 350 folio pages) and surprisingly still unstudied.³⁸ Elnatan's defense of Maimonides against his Spanish detractors illustrates further the extent of Maimonides's influence in Byzantium. Below we shall note Rambam's reception among the Karaites as well. The seminal texts of *Sefer Ha-Kaneh* and *Sefer Ha-Pliah* were compiled by a Sephardi scribe who sojourned in various Greek cities at the beginning of the fifteenth century.³⁹ Shreds of Byzantine Torah scrolls (undated but perhaps predating the destruction of the Bari community by the Normans) have been more recently discovered in Italian book bindings.⁴⁰ The study of *derashot* from the Byzantine environment has also opened a new chapter for research.⁴¹ Similar discoveries will emerge through the careful analysis of the myriad of Romaniote manuscripts now catalogued and analyzed at the Hebrew University's Center for the Study of Hebrew Manuscripts.⁴² This valuable archive needs its students to edit, study, and publish untapped chapters in the Romaniote heritage.

The leading Romaniote scholar during the period overlapping the reigns of Michael VIII and his son Andronikos II was the polymath Shemaryah Ha-Ikriti. Perhaps even more than writing contemporary history and letters, the medieval Christian world was engaged in plumbing the depths of the philosophical heritage of Plato and Aristotle. While some Byzantine philosophers continued the scholarship of the Hellenistic commentators of the sources of Greek philosophy, the normative study followed the allegorization introduced by Philo of Alexandria, a method that according to Harry Wolfson dominated

³⁸ Moshe Idel, who has examined the ms, suggested in private conversation that the author perhaps studied in Spain. Cf. *Jews of Byzantium*, 137, 158f.

³⁹ "Who Wrote *Sefer Ha-Kaneh* and *Sefer Ha-Pliah*," *Tarbiz* (Summer 1985), 150–2 (Hebrew); and *Jews of Byzantium*, 160f. Moshe Idel has supported this proposal in private discussion.

⁴⁰ C. Sirat et al. "Rouleaux de la Tora antérieurs à l'an mille," *Compte-rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1994 (1995): 861–87. New research on early Judeo-Greek manuscripts from southern Italy was presented by Gabriel Mancuso (University College, London) and Judith Olszowy-Schlanger (Sorbonne) at the VIII Congress of European Association for Jewish Studies, Moscow July 23–27, 2006, Abstracts, 84–5.

⁴¹ See above, note 26.

⁴² See, for example, the forthcoming work of Gershon Brin partially introduced in his paper at the NAPH [National Association for Professors of Hebrew] Conference in June 2005 at Stanford University "The New Byzantine Bible Commentaries and Their Place in the History of Jewish Exegesis." See also comments by I. Ta-Shma in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. M. Goodman et al. (Oxford, 2002), 236.

medieval approaches to scripture throughout the monotheistic cultures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The great Jewish student of Aristotle was Moses ben Maimon, more commonly known as Maimonides. His *Guide for the Perplexed* quickly became the vademecum for philosophical study and emerged within two generations as the preliminary text to the disciplined study of Abulafia's messianic method. Rationalists such as Judah ibn Moskoni also pursued the study of Abraham ibn Ezra and his commentators. Judah's teacher Shemarya Ha-Ikriti was a major intellectual figure in the early fourteenth century and is well known for his translations from the Greek of philosophical texts as well as independent compositions.⁴³ The latter particularly challenges his contemporary Greek scholars over their lack of sophistication in regard to Creation. This castigation of Greek scholarship, in particular philosophy, is a topos that appears frequently among Jewish scholars who had access to a rich tradition of Hebrew scholarship on the subject of Creation.⁴⁴ The Greeks had after all little more than the texts of Plato and Aristotle and the *creatio ex nihilo* dogma of the Church while he had a wealth of Judaic material in addition to Jewish mysticism and kabbalah in which creation constituted one of the two main foci of research [*ma'ase bereishit* and *ma'ase merkavah*].⁴⁵ Shemarya also informs us that he prepared a commentary on the Talmud for his son, of which his commentary on *aggadoth* in *Massekhet Megillah* of the Talmud called *Eleph Ha-Magen* has recently been edited by Aaron Ahrend.⁴⁶ Shemarya's grandson Ishmael copied Shemarya's commentaries in Patras in 1410 for a Sephardi immigrant to Greece.

In a series of articles, Israel Ta-Shma scoured manuscripts to extract data on the halakhic history of Byzantine Rabbanite scholars and to

⁴³ C. Sirat, "A Letter on the Creation by R. Shemarya b. Elijah Akriti," *Eshel Beer-Sheva* II (1980): 119–227. See too K. Ahrend, "A Philosophic Interpretation of the Kaddish by R. Shemaryah ben Elijah HaIkriti," *Da'at* 43 (Summer 1999): 43–51 (Hebrew); *Jews of Byzantium*, 258 no. 53. Ikriti refers to Crete, although he taught also in Chalkis on the island of Euboea (= Negropont).

⁴⁴ Idel, for example, cites Abraham Abulafia, Moses of Burgos (*ibid.*, 171f).

⁴⁵ See my "Hebrew as a Second Language in Byzantium," in *Acts XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies [Moscow 1991]* (Byzantine Studies Press, 1996), 84–92.

⁴⁶ *Rabbi Shemaria ben eliahu ha-Ikriti, Liber Elef ha-Magen. Commentarius in partem aggadicam tractate Megilla* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2003) and his earlier study "On Byzantine Aggadic Exegesis: The Introduction and Conclusion of the Book *Amaziyahu* by R. Shemaryah b. Elijah ha-Ikriti," *Pe'amim* 91 (2002): 165–80 (Hebrew); see *Jews of Byzantium*, 257 no. 53, and for his grandson, *ibid.* 297 no. 109.

discover the impact of their oeuvre on subsequent Ashkenazi Jewry to the north.⁴⁷ His work is a valuable contribution to the prosopographical study of late Byzantine Jewry, a rich field of names that should be included in the ongoing project of Byzantine prosopography.⁴⁸ He also traced the Ashkenazi influence on Byzantine rabbis beginning with Shemaryah ben Yehudah whose father moved to Crete shortly after the mid-fourteenth century. Both Shemaryah and his brother Abba were rabbis of note and the former was also a student of kabbalah. Shemaryah too, as Ta-Shma argues, was likely the teacher of Moses Kapsali, later chief rabbi of Istanbul after the Ottoman conquest,⁴⁹ whose father Eliyahu appears to be the first rabbi from Candia who studied in Germany. A most important argument revolves around the relatively unknown scholar Yohanan ben Reuven of Ohrid (fl. 2nd quarter of 14th c. and dead before 1458) who wrote a commentary on the *She'iltot*. Further research cited by Ta-Shma tallies the ubiquity of such commentaries in Byzantium (by far the most extant) and successive generations and comments on the popularity of the *She'iltot* in a manner reminiscent of Isaac al-Fasi's [Rif 1013–1103] comprehensive compendium of halakha (*Sefer Ha-Halakhot* or *Halakhot Rabbati*) which served as an epitome of the Talmud for Sephardi and North African Jews and later was recognized as seminal by Ashkenazi Jews. Yohanan reports that people asked him to write a running commentary on the *She'iltot* since they did not have sufficient time to study the Talmud.⁵⁰ Yohanan too follows a careful balance between Ashkenazi and Sephardi halakhic authorities and cites as well a number of contemporary Romaniote scholars and a few of his predecessors. Ta-Shma's research points up the influence of Ashkenazi traditions in Byzantium and its former territories where Romaniote scholars still flourished in the mid-fourteenth century nearly two centuries before

⁴⁷ See preliminary list in his "On Rabbinic Literature in Greece in the Fourteenth Century," *Tarbiz* 62 (1992–3): 101–14 (Hebrew), (Revised English version in note 46) and his earlier survey "Toward a History of the Cultural Links between Byzantine and Ashkenazic Jewry," in *Me'ah She'arim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, eds., E. Fleischer, G. Bildstein, C. Horowitz and B. Septimus (Jerusalem, 2001), 61–70 (Hebrew).

⁴⁸ See the proposed project for the period before 1204 in *BJGS* 32 (Summer 2003), p. 4.

⁴⁹ Joseph Hacker has explored the sources for Kapsali's title and his official position in several studies. See below, note 82.

⁵⁰ An interesting parallel to Shemarya Ha-Ikriti's comment about writing a shortened version for his son, cf. *Jews of Byzantium*, p. 257.

Yoseph Karo's seminal *Beit Yoseph*, which followed a similar comprehensive and balanced approach. He also details the influence of the *Zohar* on fourteenth-century Romaniote scholars.⁵¹

A third aspect of Rabbanite culture and one that is peculiar to Byzantine or Romaniote Jewry, as the latter is more popularly known, is the preponderant interest and legacy of its *paytanim*. The latter, who preserved the new style introduced in Late Antiquity Eretz Yisrael with Eliezer Ha-Qillar (or Ha-Qallir) and his contemporaries, continued to produce liturgical poetry in a similar vein well into the nineteenth century. This corpus of material, as noted above, has been the subject of Leon Weinberger's research for the last third of the twentieth century and has resulted in a series of publications of manuscript materials preserved in Jerusalem at the Schocken Institute and elsewhere. Weinberger also produced a similar corpus of Karaite poetry that illuminates their intercourse with Rabbanite Romaniotes. It remains now for scholars familiar with Greek and Hebrew as well as poetics to analyze the mutual influence of developments within the Byzantine tradition and their corresponding Jewish counterparts.⁵² Scholars have noticed the antecedents of the oeuvre of Romanos, the sixth-century psalmodist, perhaps of Jewish origin, whose *kantika* and other seminal contributions to the Byzantine liturgy are still in use by the Orthodox Church.⁵³ Weinberger has already shown the continuing influence of the Palestinian *piyyut* tradition which was enriched by the innovative cantor poets of Romania, who freely took elements from Spanish *paytanim* and those living in Islamic areas. The salting of Romaniote *piyyutim* and other texts with demotic Greek is a phenomenon peculiar to their heritage. In addition, one can presume a sophisticated audience capable of appreciating, even if not comprehending, the abstruse philosophical (e.g., Rambam) and mystical (e.g., *Sefer Bahir* and the *Zohar*) allusions that permeate the corpus of poetry preserved in the

⁵¹ I. Ta-Shma, "Rabbinic Literature in the Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Periods," *Jews, Turks, Ottomans. A Shared History, Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century*, ed. A. Levy (Syracuse University Press, 2002), pp. 52–60. Additional details in his "On Greek-Byzantine Rabbinic Literature of the Fourteenth Century," *Tarbiz* 62 (2003): 101–14 (Hebrew).

⁵² E.g., E. Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* I (1959) and his "Tribus Agathas (The Good Way)," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* XXII (Spring, 1977): 143–54.

⁵³ "Romanos the Melode" in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* Vol. 2 (Oxford University Press, 1991), 1807–8.

mahzorim of Romania, Corfu, Crete, Bulgaria, Kaffa, and others.⁵⁴ As yet there has been no analysis of the Romaniote musical tradition vis-à-vis the psalmodists and popular musicians of their Orthodox and Ottoman neighbors.

The hints of mutual exchange between Jews and Christians and the question of syncretistic movements in Turkic Anatolia in the later Byzantine period need to be explored more fully as indicated by the recent dissertation of Philippe Gardette.⁵⁵ More obvious is the fact that much of our midrash comes from the Byzantine period (in its broadest definition) with clearly definable texts such as the *Lekah Tob* which is contemporaneous with the late eleventh-century French exegete Rashi. *The Chronicles of Yerahmeel*, generally reckoned to be from the late eleventh or early twelfth century and assembled somewhere in Italy, reflects the scholarship of Byzantine Italy that continued nearly to the Crusades. While the work of Yerahmeel survives only in the fourteenth century *Sefer Zikhronoth*, nonetheless it preserves the interest in midrash that follows Jewish migration from Byzantine southern Italy to the early Ashkenazi settlements in the Rhineland.⁵⁶ Additionally, other texts were translated from the Greek milieu, especially in Italy, such as the Alexander Romance, behind which lies Pseudo-Kallisthenes's third-fourth century popular novel about Alexander the Great, interpolated into *Sefer Yosippon* sometime in the eleventh century.⁵⁷ In the fourteenth century Shemaryah Ha-Ikriti was translating Greek philosophical texts at the court of Robert, king of Naples (1309–1343). From this perspective the legacy of Byzantine Jewry lives on in a number of genres among Sephardim and later the Ashkenazim of Central and Eastern Europe.

Perhaps the most important book produced by Romaniote Jewry and one of the seminal sources for Jewish historical identity (among

⁵⁴ See Weinberger's *Jewish Hymnography*, passim.

⁵⁵ "Recherches sur les juifs romaniotes à l'époque des Paléologues (XIII^e–XV^e siècles)" (Université de Toulouse le Mirail, December 2003), [summary in *BJGS*, No. 33 (Winter 2003–2004), 5–6]; currently being revised for publication as *Juifs byzantins et humanistes italiens, une rencontre oubliée*. My thanks to Dr. Gardette for a copy of his manuscript.

⁵⁶ See now E. Yassif, *The Book of Memory that is The Chronicles of Jerahme'el. A Critical Edition* (Tel Aviv, 2001) (Hebrew) and the brief summary in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, 281.

⁵⁷ Edited by D. Flusser in his edition of *Sefer Yosippon: The Josippon [Josephus Gorionides] I* (Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 461–491 with commentary in Vol. II (Jerusalem, 1980). Cf. translation by S. Bowman, "Alexander and the Mysteries of India," *The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies*, II (1999), 71–111.

Rabbanites and Karaites throughout the Jewish oecumenism) for a millennium following its appearance in its present format in the tenth century is *Sefer Yosippon*. The career of this book is important for our story since its tenth- and fourteenth-century editors were Romaniote Jews, the first anonymous from southern Italy and the latter Judah ibn Moskoni from Ohrida.⁵⁸ *Sefer Yosippon* is the first history of the Second Temple period to be written by a Jew since the works of Josephus Flavius at the end of the first century. It is also the longest sustained piece of narrative prose in Hebrew during the medieval period. On both accounts, both in knowledge of the past and the style of writing and presenting history, its influence radiated throughout the Jewish and Gentile world for nearly a millennium. Since its appearance in southern Byzantine (or Lombard) Italy in the mid-tenth century, *Sefer Yosippon* gained a wide distribution and was immediately translated into numerous languages including Arabic, Ethiopic, Russian, later into Latin [which was rendered into English in the mid-sixteenth century], Yiddish, Ladino, and in modern times Polish, and English, among others. Moreover, it was handled in typical midrashic fashion by subsequent generations with a fragmentation of the unity of the text on the one hand and a series of interpolations on the other. So much so was this the case already in the centuries following its mid-tenth-century edition that, while researching the many Romaniote libraries in the lands surrounding the Aegean for works on and by Abraham ibn Ezra, the young Romaniote scholar Judah ibn Moskoni chanced upon a fragment of *Sefer Yosippon* and was so excited that he continued to collect any fragment on the Second Temple period he came across.⁵⁹ Eventually Judah put together an eclectic edition in the middle of the fourteenth century that was published in the early

⁵⁸ The question whether the tenth-century version dated 953 was authored or edited is still not resolved. Judah ibn Moskoni identifies himself formally as “Judah known as Leon son of Mosheh known as Moskoni” indicating his Romaniote origins despite his birth in Ohrida in 1328 in the Serbian kingdom of Stephen Urosh III (1321–1331) and his youth in the Empire of the Serbs, Greeks, Bulgars, and Albanians established by Stephen Dushan (1331–1355). See now for discussion of medieval ethnicity and nationalism in the medieval Balkans, J. Fine, *When Ethnicity Did Not Matter in the Balkans: A Study of Identity in Pre-Nationalist Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods* (Ann Arbor, 2006), introduction and passim.

⁵⁹ These fragments included the eleventh-century general and polemical interpolations that Flusser isolated in his edition of *Sefer Yosippon* as well as one of the Hebrew versions of Pseudo-Kallisthenes’s Alexander Romance.

sixteenth century. Subsequently it became the most frequently published source for the Jewish recollection of the Second Temple period.⁶⁰

David Flusser's seminal edition of *Sefer Yosippon*, his own eclectic version based on extensive manuscript study, examines in detail Judah ibn Moskoni's description of the wide dispersal of Abraham ibn Ezra's commentaries and the fragments of *Sefer Yosippon* in the Romaniote world of the fourteenth-century Byzantium oecumenum.⁶¹ Judah's peregrinations through the former Byzantine realm predate the Italian Renaissance search for Greek manuscripts that flourished during the following century and give us an inkling of the intellectual side of the Jewish diaspora in the southern Balkans and its unity which continued the close communications among Jews in the preceding Middle Byzantine period.⁶²

VIII. KARAITES

Hebrew sources testify to the immigration of Karaite intellectuals to the capital during the reign of Andronikos II (1282–1328) and his successors. Aaron ben Joseph, popularly called Aaron the Elder, came from the Crimea (at the end of the thirteenth century) and contributed to the development of the Karaite intellectual heritage in Byzantium and later in Eastern Europe⁶³ His seminal writings added to biblical commentary, grammatical study, and the Karaite prayer book, and remained in vogue through the Ottoman period. Recent work has shown Aaron's methodology in his commentaries to be indebted

⁶⁰ For later editions see H. Hominer, *Sefer Yosippon*, IV ed. (Jerusalem, 1978). See my preliminary studies "Josephus in Byzantium," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, eds. L. Feldman and G. Hata (Detroit, 1987), 362–85; "Sefer Yosippon: History and Midrash," in *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, and History*, ed. M. Fishbane (Albany, 1993), 280–94; "Dates in *Sefer Yosippon*," in *Pursuing the Text: Studies in Honor of BenZion Wacholder*, eds. J. Reeves and J. Kampen (Sheffield, 1994), 349–59; "Yosippon and Jewish Nationalism," *PAAJR*, Vol. LXI (1995): 23–51.

⁶¹ D. Flusser, *The Josippon (Josephus Gorionides)*, Vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1978) and a more complete bibliography in *Jews of Byzantium*, s.v. An English translation of the text and notes of Flusser's edition by the author is in press while a monograph on the book and its history is in progress. Judah's letter is available in English in *Jews of Byzantium*, pp. 283f and a more complete version in my "Dates in *Sefer Yosippon*."

⁶² Further data and bibliography on Judah ibn Moskoni is available in *Jews of Byzantium*, s.v.

⁶³ For earlier studies, see Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, s.v. and generally L. Weinberger, *Jewish Hymnography. A Literary History*, index s.v.

to rabbinic commentators and philosophers, in particular the Aristotelianism of Maimonides.⁶⁴ In the next generation Aaron ben Elijah of Nikomedia (ca. 1328–1369), popularly called Aaron the Younger, moved from Nicaea to the capital where he wrote some of the major Karaite studies in religious law and philosophy that have recently gained new researchers. He too was influenced by Maimonides as much as he tried to defend older Karaite philosophical positions.⁶⁵ The revival of intellectual life in Constantinople and Thessalonike during the fourteenth century is paralleled by a continuity of Jewish—both Karaite and Rabbanite—intellectual output during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The paucity of historical data then is not necessarily an indication of a general decline, since there was evidently sufficient support for such endeavors in the fields of liturgical and secular poetry, biblical commentary and sermons, philosophy and mysticism, belles-lettres, and the demand for scribal services.

In the past two generations, considerable interest in the biblical commentaries, legal codes, and philosophical treatises of the well known Karaites savants of the Palaeologue period has emerged. The study of Byzantine Karaism has witnessed considerable progress since the appearance of Zvi Ankori's important study. Ankori's researches have been summarized and subsequently expanded by later scholars; however, his magnum opus has still not been superseded. A new handbook of Karaite studies prominently displays recent studies of Byzantine Karaite scholarship that have been explored in greater depth by Fred Astren in his novel approach to the development of a Karaite historical consciousness that he argues is a product of the Karaite adaptation to the Byzantine environment.⁶⁶ Moreover, Astren enriches the material available to non-Hebraists by presenting translations of several important Karaite depictions of their evolving historical argument. The question remains for scholarship to determine to what extent earlier Karaite works actively influenced later Byzantine Karaites. Yehuda Hadassi's

⁶⁴ See inter alia D. Lasker, "Aaron ben Joseph and the Transformation of Karaite Thought," in R. Link-Salinger, ed., *Torah and Wisdom Studies in Jewish Philosophy, Kabbalah, and Halakha: Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman* (New York, 1992), 121–28 and his essays in *Karaite Judaism* (below) p. 510.

⁶⁵ D. Lasker, "Nature and Science in the Philosophy of Aaron b. Elijah the Karaite," in *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume* Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1988), 477–92, and his essay in *Karaite Judaism* (below) pp. 512ff.

⁶⁶ F. Astren, *Karaite Judaism and Historical Understanding* (South Carolina, 2004).

polemical *Eshkol Ha-Kopher*, written during the twelfth century, had fallen into oblivion and was rescued for later generations only in the fifteenth century by the Karaite polymath Kaleb Afendopoulo. Jean-Christophe Attias's monograph on Kaleb Afendopoulo shows to what extent a serious enquiry can illuminate a whole period of interaction between Romaniotes, Sephardim, and Karaites in the transitional period between Byzantine and Ottoman rule.⁶⁷

The republication of Karaite classics in Israel since the establishment of the state and the reemergence of a Karaite center in Ramleh has attracted considerable interest from scholars in various fields of Judaic Studies. The comprehensive bibliography of Karaitica, in preparation for Makhon Ben Zvi, will continue the organization of the field recently summarized in Meira Polliack's compendium *Karaite Judaism*.⁶⁸

IX. ORTHODOXY'S SCAPEGOAT

The dearth of historical data about Byzantine Jewry during the period of civil strife among the Palaiologoi and with the Kantakouzenoi families during the middle third of the fourteenth century is somewhat compensated by a record of intellectual contumely. Andronicus III (1328–1341), after prolonged civil war, forced his grandfather to abdicate. His son John V (1341–1376) was initially under the regency of his mother against whom John Kantakouzenos revolted (1341–1347), occupied Constantinople and usurped the imperial title (1347–1354). The period was also rife with chaos as the popular masses, decimated by the plague, erupted in revolt in the cities of Thessalonike where the Zealots established a short-lived republic [1342–1347], Constantinople, Adrianople, and elsewhere. Chaos was exacerbated by the intrusion of Serbia [Stephen Dushan became emperor of the Serbs and Romans in 1346] and the Osmanli Turks into the civil strife between the imperial families [1353, occupied Gallipoli in 1354 and Adrianople in 1361].

⁶⁷ J. Attias, *Le commentaire biblique: Mordecai Komtino ou l'hermeneutique du dialogue* (Paris, 1991) and his "Intellectual Leadership: Rabbinite-Karaite Relations in Constantinople as Seen through the Works and Activity of Mordekhai Comtino in the Fifteenth Century" in *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership*, ed. A. Rodrigue (Bloomington, 1992), 67–86.

⁶⁸ M. Polliack, ed., *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources* (Leiden, 2003).

Finally the Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos (1341–1354) was overthrown and relegated to the monastery of Mangana where he piously penned a tractate against the Jews.⁶⁹ Several other anti-Jewish tracts and diatribes survive from the period including a lengthy *apologia* by Theophanes III, Metropolitan of Nicaea, a nasty reference to recourse to Jewish physicians by Joseph Bryennios, and the anti-Jewish slur of Demetrios Kydones in his letter to the Patriarch Philotheos.⁷⁰ Occasional comments by pilgrims attest to the continued level of contempt among the Orthodox on the popular level.⁷¹ Such examples represent the continuity of an intellectual and religious arrogant superiority towards Jews that reflects in part the inability of the Orthodox to adjust, if not recognize, Byzantine decline and the changing nature of the Balkans during the Palaeologan period. This heritage of denigration was bequeathed to the Slavic societies to the north of the declining empire and dominates the intellectual and religious life of the autocephalous churches and their communities for centuries after the fall of Byzantium.

X. ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

The rabbinic proverb *im eyn kemah eyn torah* [there is no scholarship without support] is a reminder of the importance of the economic infrastructure of any society to its intellectual development. Modern scholarship has not been remiss in studying the abundant sources for the economic history of the Byzantium oecumenum. While there is a paucity of source material for the Middle Byzantine period (from Heraclius to the Fourth Crusade), recently summarized by Joshua Holo and Michael Toch,⁷² the later period is better served by the critical analysis of Venetian and Byzantine sources by David Jacoby, who has

⁶⁹ Under his monastic signature of John Christodoulos; cf. *Jews of Byzantium*, no. 78. See summary of period in Barker, *DOP* 57, 15ff.

⁷⁰ *Jews of Byzantium*, no. 97, no. 79, no. 93.

⁷¹ Recently reedited with translation by G. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, 1984). Pp. 38, 136, 150f, 162f, 266f, 304, 342, 358f.

⁷² J. Holo, *Byzantine Jewry in the Mediterranean Economy* (Cambridge, 2009) and M. Toch's chapter on Byzantium in his forthcoming "Economic History of Medieval European Jews." My thanks to Professor Toch for an advanced reading of this chapter. See his more general survey "The Jews in Europe, 500–1050" in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2005).

been publishing studies on varied aspects of the social and economic history of post-1204 Byzantine Jewry in a continuing series of articles.⁷³ The Cairo Genizah, though its zenith was prior to the Palaeologan period, nonetheless has contributed through the efforts of Jacoby and others to a better understanding of the commercial nexus in the East Mediterranean and so sheds light on Byzantine Jewish economic interests. The material on Crete was originally presented by Joshua Starr and has been added to by Jacoby in numerous articles.⁷⁴ Zvi Ankori has collected an extensive personal archive on the Jews of the Venetian commercial empire.⁷⁵

David Jacoby, as noted, has intensively advanced the study of Jewish areas of settlement in Constantinople. In addition, he has added new material toward the role of the Jews in the manufacture and trade in silk. He has gleaned the Venetian archives for data on Greek Jews and the peculiar relationship that some had succeeded in obtaining with Venice. Such special protection to non-citizens has been the hallmark of the Jewish condition in the Balkans and is much better known and documented during the Ottoman period and its successor the Modern Greek state. Yet it is important to note that its origins were already evident in the Palaeologan period as were other aspects of the Ottoman Jewish experience as we shall see below. This symbiotic relationship, which extended to the intellectual arena as well, is generally neglected due to the supersession of the Romaniotes by the Sephardi Jews who arrived after 1500 and dominated the Balkan scene until their destruction during World War II and the emigration of many of the survivors in the wake of the war.

⁷³ About five volumes of his collected studies have appeared through Variorum Press. Most articles are listed in BJGS.

⁷⁴ "Jewish Life in Crete under the Rule of Venice," *PAAJR* XII (1942): 59–114. Jacoby's numerous articles are listed in his website at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and in BJGS.

⁷⁵ Preliminary studies for the period prior to the Ottoman conquest appeared as "The Living and the Dead: The Story of Hebrew Inscriptions in Crete," *PAAJR* XXXIX–XL (1970–71): 1–100; and "Jews and the Jewish Community in the History of Mediaeval Crete," *Proceedings of the 2nd International Congress of Cretological Studies* (Athens, 1968), III, 312–67. His earlier survey "Greek Orthodox Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective—The Jewish View," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* XXII (1977): 17–57 was expanded in a lengthy essay *Encounter in History: Jews and Christian Greeks in their Relation through the Ages* (Hebrew) and my review in *Speculum* 63 (1988): 114–5.

XI. EPILOGUE: THE OTTOMANS: CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY

Granted that Christian art, Balkan history, and Judeo-Greek dialects⁷⁶ are not areas that attract students in traditional Jewish studies, what is still surprising is the near total lack of interest in the rich library of Byzantine Hebrew texts that have survived in toto or in fragmentary form. Many of these texts are being reevaluated for their contribution to Romaniote studies as can be seen from the notes to the present essay.⁷⁷

The intellectual heritage of Byzantine Jews preserved in Romaniote manuscripts and in later Ashkenazi tracts parallels to some extent the effusion of Orthodox influence throughout the Balkans in the late Byzantine period.⁷⁸ While recognizing the emergence of a wider Orthodox Commonwealth that is still manifested in our contemporary Balkans,⁷⁹ at the same time we must note the prolonged decline of Orthodoxy and its adherents in Anatolia.⁸⁰ Its major cause was the appearance of a new historical phenomenon on the Byzantine-Seljuq frontier under the leadership of Ertoghul. The rise of these Osmanli Turks from an aggressive band of *ghazis* on the Asiatic frontier of Byzantium at the end of the thirteenth century to an imperial sultanate centered in Constantinople and controlling the Balkans and much of Asia Minor by the mid-fifteenth century is a success story that has been frequently told and well examined. The rapid advance was assisted, as was the initial spread of Islam in the seventh century, by the disarray of its opponents, the fervor of its jihadist ideology (the Ottomans were militant *ghazis*), and the Darwinian survival of the fittest as practiced by the descendants of Osman. Only the strongest son, as recognized by

⁷⁶ See S. Sznol, "Medieval Judeo-Greek Bibliography: Texts and Vocabularies," *Jewish Studies* 39 (1999): 107–132 and the many essays by N. de Lange cited in the *Bulletin of Judeo-Greek Studies*, passim.

⁷⁷ The near total absence of Byzantium from the 1000 pages of *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* is but one justification for the present volume.

⁷⁸ D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth, 500–1453* (New York, 1972).

⁷⁹ Victoria Clark, *Why Angels Fall: A Journey through Orthodox Europe from Byzantium to Kosovo* (New York, 2000).

⁸⁰ The standard reference is still S. Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971). Most recently, Vryonis has chronicled and analyzed the modern denouement of Orthodoxy in the ancestral Byzantine capital: S. Vryonis, *The Mechanism of Catastrophe. The Turkish Pogrom of September 6–7, 1955, and the Destruction of the Greek Community of Istanbul* (New York, 2005).

the first professional army since Roman times, was allowed to live, his brothers being the recipients of silken cords to dignify their ordained suicide.

The growth of the Osmanli sultanate was a result of constant aggressive warfare supported by an administrative stability in both Asia Minor and the Balkans. Osman's capital at Bursa (Bithynian Prusa) from 1326 was succeeded by Bayezid's at Edirne (Thracian Adrianople) in 1365 and Mehmet's at Istanbul (Constantinople) in 1453, while the remaining major cities of Byzantine Anatolia, e.g., Philadelphia, slowly surrendered through the fourteenth century in tandem with the defeat of the Serbs and Bulgarians. The only aberration in the progression of conquests was the brief abandonment of the single heir policy after Bayezid I which led to the civil strife among his three sons—Musa, Isa, and Mehmet—that so weakened the state it fell like a pomegranate into the bloody hands of Timurlink, the last of the great Mongol conquerors to ravage western Asia.⁸¹

Despite the chaos of war urban life survived, and insofar as the Jews were concerned, they flourished as refugees to the Balkans and immigrants from Byzantium were welcomed in the new Ottoman centers. Tradition has the Jewish exiles from Central Europe finding refuge among the Ottomans, particularly in Salonika. Later on yeshivas will appear in the former Bulgarian realm and in Edirne, the capital from 1365–1453, where Byzantine and Crimean Karaites resettled as merchants and scholars.⁸² During the reign of Mehmet I, the House of Bashyachi instituted a series of reforms that successfully adjusted the Balkan and later East European Karaites to a European diasporic survival.⁸³ Even so the reform was intensely fought by conservatives throughout the fifteenth century.⁸⁴ Rabbanite Romaniote scholars also flocked to Edirne where they established schools and took in Karaite

⁸¹ See H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300–1600* (New York, 1973) and the earlier studies of P. Wittek, "De la défaite d'Ankara à la prise de Constantinople," *Revue des études islamiques* 12 (1934): 1–34 and his *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1938).

⁸² T. Schegoleva, "Crimean Karaites: History, Self-Comprehension, Present-Day Situation," in *Euro-Asian Jewish Year Book 5765 (2004/2005)* (Kyiv, 2006), 162–77 suggests a reverse movement of Greek-speaking Karaites to the Crimea, in particular to Mangup (165).

⁸³ Z. Ankori, "The Bashyachi School and Its Reforms" in the reedition of Bashyachi's Code of Karaite Law *Addereth Eliahu* (Ramleh, 1966) (Hebrew).

⁸⁴ See texts in J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, Vol. II (Philadelphia, 1935).

students.⁸⁵ Byzantine life in the north was rapidly shifting toward a condominium among Greek-speaking Rabbanites and Karaites and Ashkenazim. In Constantinople, already since the fourteenth century, we find Catalan Jewish immigrants alongside those local Jews who had achieved Venetian protection, and these Iberian Jews would make use of local scholars to acquire Greek philosophical scholarship alongside their traditional Hebrew and translated Arabic culture. Evidence, noted above, from the Ottoman period shows Jewish settlements spread along the Via Egnatia from Dyrrachium to Constantinople. All of these would be transferred to his new capital by Mehmet II shortly after his conquest, perhaps in 1455. The vicissitudes of these Roman-ioties, identified as *sürgün* in Ottoman sources, has been examined by Joseph Hacker in a number of studies.⁸⁶

In the last remnants of Christian Byzantium, in the Despotate of Morea centered at Mistra and the realm of the Grand Komnenos in Trebizond, we read of Jewish merchants and intellectuals, some of whom were attached to the court. Even so, our sources show the continuity of Christian bias whether in the Satire of Mazaris or the standard ecclesiastical polemic. One reference is of particular interest and concerns the leading intellect of the last generation of Byzantium, George Gemistos Plethon. The latter was accused by his opponents of being a neo-pagan, a 'hellenist' in contemporary insult, and of having studied in his youth with a Jewish philosopher—also denoted as a pagan—in Edirne who exerted influence at the Ottoman court. We know more of this Elissaeos—Elisha *hayevani*—from Jewish sources, and he appears to be, as were many of his Jewish contemporaries, a polymath specializing in medicine and philosophy.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ See above, notes 60–62.

⁸⁶ Beginning with his Hebrew dissertation "The Jewish Community of Salonica from the Fifteenth to the Sixteenth Century: A Chapter in the History of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire and their Relations with the Authorities" (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1978); "The *Sürgün* System and Jewish Society in the Ottoman Empire," in *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry*, 1–65; and "Ottoman Policy toward the Jews and Jewish Attitudes towards the Ottomans during the Fifteenth Century," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, I, eds. B. Braude and B. Lewis, (New York, 1982), 117–26.

⁸⁷ *Jews of Byzantium*, 162 and no. 137; E. Wust, "Elisha the Greek: A Physician and Philosopher at the Beginning of the Ottoman Period," *Peamim* 41 (Autumn 1989): 49–57 (Hebrew).

The paucity of sources restricts any in-depth reconstruction of Jewish history in Byzantium during the first half of the fifteenth century. We know that those Jews who could afford it moved to Edirne, especially those of Salonika during the interlude (1423–1430) when the latter was under the control of the Venetians who had purchased the city from the peripatetic Crusader Order of the Hospitallers in their journey from Jerusalem to Rhodes and Malta. We read of Jews in Constantinople only after the Ottoman conquest when a local sage, Moses Kapsali, emerged as judge and leader of the Romaniotes transferred by Mehmet II from Anatolia and the Balkans to repopulate his new capital. The extent of his influence among and on behalf of the Romaniote communities absorbed in continuing conquests of former Byzantine territories has still not been resolved.⁸⁸ By 1470 Jews would constitute some 10% of the city's population, numbering perhaps 1500 in the aggregate.⁸⁹

During the period of transition between a reinvigorated Byzantine state under Michael Palaeologos through the fourteenth-century civil wars and into the fifteenth-century dependency on Ottoman largesse, Jews survived and even flourished periodically in Byzantium. They provided the demographic, cultural, and administrative infrastructure to accommodate the immigrants from Anatolia, Crimea, and Central Europe, and later, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the flood of refugees from the Iberian expulsions. The latter wave of Sephardim would, within a generation, displace the central leadership of the Romaniotes [Moses Kapsali was succeeded by Eliahu Mizrahi], which had developed in tandem with the Ottoman recognition of a central ethnic leadership for their *zimmi* minorities (Greek Orthodox, Romaniote Jewish, and Armenian), with a fragmented leadership of meritocracy that paralleled contemporary Jewish leadership in the emerging centers of Poland and has remained predominant to the present among Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews. This rabbinic leadership

⁸⁸ See above studies by Joseph Hacker who has explored the extant material and the recent critique of his interpretations by M. Rozen, *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul: The Formative Years, 1453–1566* (Leiden, 2002), 64–77.

⁸⁹ *Jews of Byzantium*, pp. 192f and addenda, pp. 371f; H. Inalcik, "Ottoman Galata, 1453–1553," *Varia Turcica 13 (Colloque Galata)*, (Istanbul, 1991): 43–103 and his "Jews in the Ottoman Economy and Finances" in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. (Princeton, N.J., 1991).

would be primarily internal and function in tandem, occasionally at odds, with the wealthy Jews who interceded with the officials at the Sublime Porte, perhaps, *mutatis mutandis*, a continuation of the situation in pre-expulsion Iberia and pre-conquest Byzantium.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ See M. Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Freiburg, 1980) and his "The Leadership of the Ottoman Jews in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Braude and Lewis, 101–16. In general, see Rozen, *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul*.

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS IN BYZANTIUM: A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP

Spyros N. Troianos

The *Appendix Eclogae*,¹ a compendium of texts that is composed primarily of Justinian regulations supplementing the *Ecloga*, includes, among others, a text which, for the sake of simplicity, is known as the *Nomos Mosaïkos* among Byzantine legal scholars. The complete Greek title for the text is “Ἐκλογή τοῦ παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ τοῦ Μωυσέως δοθέντος νόμου τοῖς Ἰσραηλίταις” which means, “selection of the law given by God through Moses to the Israelites.” The *Nomos Mosaïkos* is also disseminated outside of the *Appendix Eclogae*—however, it appears almost exclusively in canonical florilegia.

This text concerns a collection of approximately 70 primarily verbatim excerpts from the Septuagint translation of the Pentateuch, which are allocated among the various books as follows: 21 excerpts from Exodus 21–23; 29 excerpts from Leviticus 5, 18–21, and 24–25; 3 excerpts from Numbers 27, 30, and 35; 18 excerpts from Deuteronomy 5, 15, 17, 19, and 21–25. The ca. 70 excerpts are divided into 50 chapters. These chapters consist of one or more thematically related excerpts; they include rubrics that contain information about the respective contents, and apparently stem from the compiler of the *Nomos Mosaïkos* himself.

From the fact that the *Nomos Mosaïkos* is transmitted by *Ecloga* manuscripts as part of the *Appendix Eclogae*, one cannot simply deduce without further evidence that the *Nomos Mosaïkos* was exclusively incorporated into manuscripts having secular-legal content during the eighth and ninth centuries, as, in contrast to these, theological and canonical florilegia from the Iconoclastic period had, from the outset, almost no hope of surviving. Yet, unaffected by this, the fact remains that the text appears primarily in juridical manuscripts. This conclusion and the broader fortunes of the *Nomos Mosaïkos* in its transmission history allow the conjecture that from the beginning, a

¹ L. Burgmann, S. Troianos, “Nomos Mosaïkos”, *Fontes Minores III*, Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte, 4 (Frankfurt a.M., 1979): 126–67.

close literary-historical relationship existed between the *Nomos Mosaikos* and juridical literature.

By these means, the question about the collection's purpose is elided, which is simultaneously closely related to the construction of the contents. The latter is conceptualized only with difficulty. In order to correctly evaluate the selection criteria, it must be clearly articulated what the excerpted sources generally offered in material on the one hand, and what, on the other hand, was the compiler's context. Regarding this, the fact that the two initiating points do not coincidentally converge in an emphasis on penal standards in a broad sense must not be overlooked. In this respect, the *Nomos Mosaikos* literarily and also historically fits into the context of the *Ecloga* and the *Appendix Ecloga*. Even without a glimpse of a possibility of ever being able to prove it, the last editor of the *Nomos Mosaikos* even assumed that its composition ought to be located temporally close to that of the *Ecloga*.²

A comparison with the *Collatio legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum*³ is inevitable here and not just in relation to the question of the purpose of the *Nomos Mosaikos*. Afflicted as the *Collatio* is with many unsolved problems, this even more curious and more unusual collection can absolutely serve in certain points as a foil for judging the *Nomos Mosaikos*, according to the editors of the work. That the opposition between Old Testament and "valid" law is taken up directly in the *Collatio*, while it is at most implied in the *Nomos Mosaikos*, has more than just formal implications: approximately three hundred years separate the two collections, during which Christianity had finally consolidated its hold as the undisputed state religion and had emerged as the supporting pillar of national ideology and its rituals. Apologetic motifs (from whichever direction they may have come) and harmonizing tendencies between pagan, Classical juridical literature, and the as yet immature state religion, which were supposedly the inspiration for the *Collatio*, had no further role to play, beginning, perhaps not quite as early as Justinian, but certainly by the time the writings of the Classical jurists were incorporated "in nomine Domini nostri Jhesu Christi" into his codification.

² Burgmann, Troianos, *ibid.*, 135.

³ P. E. Pieler, comp., "Byzantinische Rechtsliteratur"; H. Hunger, ed., *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, Vol. 2 (Munich, 1978), 341–480, esp. 385.

Following the Christianization of law, there could, in truth, be no discussion about a complete conformity with the “legal standards” transmitted in the Bible. However, the editors of the *Nomos Mosaïkos* do not even consider calling attention to possible differences (from whatever point of view) as a secondary reason for its composition.

A decisive viewpoint for the two editors⁴ appears to be that in the interests of its “broad effect,” a religion like Christianity requires a consistently new mediation in the behavioral norms it transmits. The *Nomos Mosaïkos* was apparently viewed as suitable for fulfilling this type of function. In addition, they allude to the fact that juridical texts in Byzantium (also) had, not least, a pedagogic-propagandistic function. If one considers that Moses was regarded as the law-giver *par excellence*, then the *Nomos Mosaïkos* naturally blends in flawlessly. This thought, however, appears to me (one of the two editors of the *Nomos Mosaïkos*) to have been merely an argument for placing the text under discussion in temporal proximity to the composition of the *Ecloga*. By the same arguments it is possible, as Peter Pieler has correctly observed,⁵ to justify the composition of the *Nomos Mosaïkos* in the epoch prior to the Isaurian codification.

More than 25 years have passed since the last edition of the *Nomos Mosaïkos*. At this point, after careful consideration, I am no longer prepared to assume that this collection of Mosaic judicial texts represents a foreign body within the Byzantine juridical tradition. It is true that the secular law of the Rhomaioi ultimately moved in the circles of Justinian juridical texts and imperial amendments,⁶ yet the Byzantine law givers repeatedly referred back to Old Testament ideas. A very characteristic example is offered by the first sentences from the Prooimion of the *Ecloga*:

Ὁ δεσπότης καὶ ποιητὴς τῶν ἀπάντων Θεὸς ἡμῶν, ὁ κτίσας τὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ τιμήσας αὐτὸν τῇ αὐτεξουσιότητι, νόμον αὐτῷ κατὰ τὸ προφητικῶς εἰρημένον δεδωκῶς εἰς βοήθειαν πάντα αὐτῷ τὰ τε πρακτέα καὶ ἀπευκταῖα δι' αὐτοῦ κατέστησε γνῶριμα.

⁴ Burgmann and Troianos, *ibid.*, 136.

⁵ P. E. Pieler, “Das Alte Testament im Rechtsdenken der Byzantiner,” in *Analecta Atheniensia ad ius byzantinum spectantia* I, Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte. Athener Reihe, 10, ed. S. Troianos (Athens, 1997), 81–113, esp. 111, fn. 82.

⁶ Pieler, “Das Alte Testament,” 90.

[The Lord and creator of all things, our God, who created man and distinguished him with autonomy, gave him, as the prophet says, the Law to be his aide and made him aware by that of everything, that which was to be done and that which was to be left undone.]⁷

By means of this explicit reference to Isaiah 8:20,⁸ where *Nomos* [law] is discussed, the compilers of the *Ecloga* make clear that the Byzantine concept of law had its origin in the Old Testament *Nomos*.⁹

Naturally, this outlook should not to be connected with the reign of the first emperor of the Isaurian dynasty and its legislative activity; it originated much earlier, indeed within the context of the process of Christianizing the Roman legal system.¹⁰ The Old Testament-Christian concepts of law and nation did not form the foundation for action for the first Christian emperor. Instead the perception was still that which arose in the Greco-Roman world, when the state had to ensure the correct veneration of the gods, for its own good and for that of its citizens. Which gods, how, where, and when to venerate them, was determined solely by the state. The Judeo-Christian tradition saw, on the other hand, a primarily religiously-based community regulation in the theocracy imprinted in the Old Testament.

The differing conceptions of the relationship of church and state did not disappear following the Edict of Milan, according to which Christianity was no longer a *religio illicita*, and persecution ceased. Rather, the acknowledgement of Christianity led very quickly to new confrontations. From the imperial side, the belief that the state administered unlimited religious capacity through the emperor was not shaken due to a commitment to the Christian God. Scholars who have researched the relationship between church and state in the East Roman Empire have been constantly obligated to emphasize the continuity of the legitimation of authority in regard to its integration within the ideals of the Roman world and the Greek philosophy of the state, at the expense of the Christian representation of the empire.

⁷ L. Burgmann, *Ecloga. Das Gesetzbuch Leons III. und Konstantinos' V.* Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte 10, (Frankfurt a.M., 1983), 160–1.

⁸ “Νόμον γὰρ εἰς βοήθειαν ἔδωκεν.”

⁹ S. Troianos, comp., “Das Gesetz in der griechischen Patristik,” *Das Gesetz in Spätantike und frühem Mittelalter* 4. Symposium, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Kl. 3. F., 196, W. Sellar ed., (Göttingen, 1992), 47–62, esp. 47–8.

¹⁰ Comp. in the following the arguments made by Pieler, “Das Alte Testament,” 84ff.

When sources from Late Antiquity present the Roman emperor as a new David or Solomon, it usually means that the emperor is being presented to the Christians as an Old Testament king. Eusebius of Caesarea addresses Constantine the Great as a “new Moses.” In this way, the emperor’s law-giving function is granted Christian legitimacy on the one hand, and on the other it also emphasizes that imperial legislation represents a mediating authority for the divine legal system mentioned above. That this Christian interpretation of Roman imperial power found any reverberations at all in the populace is substantiated by early Christian art. At the beginning of the fourth century, a large number of sarcophagi on which Pharaoh’s destruction in the Red Sea and Moses’ rescue of the Israelites are represented.¹¹ Here, for the first time, a connection is made between, first of all, the freeing of the Old Testament people of God and the persecuted church of the fourth century; second, the destruction of the “chosen people’s” enemies then and now by floods (the Battle at the Milvian Bridge and the Catastrophe in the Red Sea); and finally the Israeli military leader and Constantine the Great, the “new Moses.”

The Byzantines were not satisfied with this simple identification: they required additional meaningful signs and someone fulfilled this desire for a magic wand at the correct moment. A note in the Pseudo-Kodinos embellishes Constantine’s Moses image: according to it, Emperor Constantine had the Staff of Moses brought to Constantinople as a reliquary and ultimately preserved in the imperial palace.¹² Solomon’s Throne in the Magnaura also belongs in this group of symbols and the identification endeavor.¹³

From these Old Testament traits in Constantine’s image from late antique Christianity, it is only a small step to the Old Testament motifs of Byzantine ceremonial. Indeed, the Old Testament anointing

¹¹ E. Becker, “Konstantin der Große, der ‘neue Moses’. Die Schlacht am Pons Milvius und die Katastrophe am Schilfmeer,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 31 (1910): 161–70.

¹² “When the Staff of Moses was brought into the city under Constantine the Great, the emperor received him there (by St. Aemilian) on foot and constructed a very great church dedicated to the Mother of God there, where he laid the Staff down... After this, however, he took the Staff away to the Palace.” Quoted [translated] according to O. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell. Vom oströmischen Staats- und Reichsgedanken* (Darmstadt, 1956), 134. Comp. the edition by T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanum*, Vol. II (Leipzig, 1907), 102, ll. 18ff.

¹³ Treitinger, *ibid.*, 134f. (with notes for additional literature and sources).

of kings was actually carried out in the late Byzantine period, but as a topos it plays an important role much earlier in the sources. It should be noted that according to the book of ceremonies from Constantine VII (913–959), the emperor's coronation at Pentecost is mystically linked with the presentation of the stone tablets received by Moses from God on Mount Sinai.¹⁴ In the ceremonial, the Throne of Solomon and the Table of David are alluded to along with the Staff of Moses as actual relics in the world of the Byzantine imperial palace. The logical conclusion, that the Byzantine emperor should appear as the successor to the Old Testament Kings, even that he should appear as one of them,¹⁵ is in no way exaggerated. That is to say, this shows a clearly recognizable juridico-political aspiration of Christianly legitimizing the Roman Empire as an Old Testament kingdom.

Yet, the Christian interpretation of imperial power in the Early Byzantine period was primarily a problem of church doctrine. In this context, one matter of dispute in Church-State relationships—and indeed not only in the Early Byzantine period—lay in the perception of the emperor's sacral functions. This so-called Byzantine Caesaropapism is consistently legitimized through reference to the Old Testament priest-king Melchizedek.¹⁶ A summary of the exempla for describing the emperor hearkening back to the Old Testament is found in the acclamation of the imperial couple at the end of the sixth session of the Council of Chalcedon. The Council Fathers directed the following words towards Marcian and Pulcheria, “Long live Marcian, the new Constantine, the new Paul, the new David! The life of David to the emperor!”¹⁷ The concluding acclamation, “Long live the priest-king!” employs the image of Melchizedek, even though he is not named explicitly. Along with the invocation of David, the emperor is naturally placed in relation to New Testament figures such as Paul and the apostles in general. Even Constantine and Helena are addressed

¹⁴ Treitinger, *ibid.*, 37. “Here on Pentecost, the coronation of the emperor is thus mystically linked with the presentation of the stone tablets by God the Father on Mount Sinai.” Compare with: *ibid.*, fn. 27: “In the Old Testament, Pentecost is the festival of remembrance for the granting of the law on Sinai and it is brought here from thence in order to draw in God the Father as well.”

¹⁵ Treitinger, *ibid.*, 135.

¹⁶ K. Girardet, comp., “Das christliche Priestertum Konstantins des Großen,” *Chiron* 10 (1980): 569–92, esp. 575–6.

¹⁷ *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* II, 1, 2 p. 155, ll. 12–28. Comp. P.-Th. Camelot, *Ephesus und Chalcedon* (Mainz, 1963), 153.

in their exemplary function as Christian models. One could easily draw the conclusion that the interpretation of imperial rule attaining expression in the acclamation forms a strategy of legitimacy for the early Christian empire, primarily in the fourth century. In this time of transition from the pagan cultural foundation of the empire to Christianity, the existence of an old and genuine Christian legal culture was demonstrated by the use of the Old Testament, while the imperial regime, which had pagan origins, was legitimized by the early Christian tradition.

This concept appears, however, to have no concrete relevance after the fifth century. In particular, Justinian I allowed the Old Testament images to be pushed into the background by his Roman archaism and his Hellenistic cultural imprinting. This impression of the Old Testament as lacking in political timeliness is admittedly disturbed if one examines the official imperial titles. As has been recently and correctly noted,¹⁸ the replacement of the official, classical imperial titles by the plain βασιλεύς title under Heraclius is to be understood as a deliberate rejection of the Roman tradition and as an adoption of the Christian, Old Testament appellation of the ruler. Once we understand that the self-designation of the emperor in official documents possesses great political meaning, the act is accorded the weight of a programmatic decision. It signals, probably not without correlation to the change in dynasty, a new vision of its own dominion and introduces a further Christianization.

With the disclosure of the Old Testament reference in the imperial titles at the beginning of the seventh century, the appearance of the same in juridical literature of the eighth century, which was the previous topic (namely the composition of the *Nomos Mosaiikos*) no longer appears peculiar and singular. Nevertheless, the question remains why did recourse to Old Testament body of thought occur in this particular period. Abandoning his previous opinion, that the explanation for the composition of this collection is associated with Iconoclasm, whose scriptural foundation is generally known to lie in the Decalogue's second commandment, Peter Pieler now believes that a push in the direction towards using Old Testament *topoi* resulted already from

¹⁸ O. Kresten, "Heraclius und der Titel βασιλεύς," *Varia VII*, Freie Universität Berlin. Byzantinisch-neugriechisches Seminar. Ποικίλα βυζαντινά, 18 (Bonn, 2000): 178–9.

the conversion of the imperial titles during Heraclius's period. In a search for additional references for this paradigm change from the Greco-Roman world to Old Testament ideas, he places the Byzantine agrarian laws (Νόμοι γεωργικοί) under the microscope.

This source, probably originating at the end of the seventh rather than the eighth century,¹⁹ draws on the Justinian Code, according to the identification of its rubric, which itself is transmitted in at least one group of manuscripts.²⁰ The text of the Code is communicated, however, in an unusual form. The unknown compiler never quotes directly from the Justinian texts, but instead uses the Greek translations merely as a stimulus in order to formulate legal rules from it in simple language. It has frequently been conjectured that other sources had also served as the *Corpus iuris civilis* for the composition of the "legal text" under discussion. Within the context of a detailed analysis of paragraphs 1, 23, 26, 27, 38, 49, 52, 67, 70, 78, and 79 of the agrarian law, Pieler proves that they demonstrate a relation to the law of the Pentateuch, in other words, that the unknown author also used Mosaic law as a source along with the Justinian Code.

Among the many juridico-political and sociological considerations that Pieler presents to explain this circumstance, I find the following to be especially insightful: the preference for the Old Testament, beginning already in the late sixth century, occurs not least because of its martial usefulness. As an ideology for an empire that desired to assert itself in battle against superior enemies of a different faith, the New Testament message of peace was not suitable. Much more appropriate was the history of the people of Israel, whose bellicose God saved his chosen people from all danger and led them to victory.²¹ The result of the strategy—viewed from a military as well as an intellectual historical perspective—quite decisively advanced the position of Old Testament ideas into the seventh century. Therefore, if the contemporary legal education also consciously absorbed elements from the Old Testament legal system, it only appears consistent. It cannot be claimed with certainty whether this had occurred already in the guise of the agrarian laws in the seventh century, since it is not possible to make a certain

¹⁹ S. Troianos, comp., *Οι πηγές του βυζαντινού δικαίου*, (Athens, 32011), 170ff.

²⁰ See the critical edition by I. P. Medvedev, E. K. Piotrovskaja, E. E. Lipšic, *Vizantijskij Zemledel'českij Zakon* (Leningrad, 1984), 96.

²¹ This thought is further supported by examples from hymnography (e.g. the 'Akathistos Hymnos') and the hagiography of the period under discussion.

dating of the individual sentences from the compendium. Incidentally, the designation of the legal source as *nomoi* (laws) does not always result in a retrieval of a law-giver. The absolutely inconsistent paragraphs of the agrarian law do not conform to a codification. The most probable is the successive compilation of the text from jurisprudence or imperial legislation. Only accretive literary activity in the following periods brought this source into the form by which it is currently known to us. The systematic codification of Old Testament law, the above-mentioned *Nomos Mosaïkos*, probably owes its creation to the same intellectual-historical environment as well. Whether it formed according to the last logical conclusion and is therefore to be temporally placed after the agrarian laws, or whether it, as the programmatic precursor, initiated the Old Testament exertion of influence on the agrarian laws, cannot be decided.²²

Aside from the collections contained in its appendix, the *Ecolga* of the Isaurian emperors, promulgated in 741, features no clear Old Testament references. In the ninth century, the step-by-step replacement of the intellectual historical model of the Old Testament took place. Classical Antiquity returned within the context of the Macedonian renaissance to its previous dominant position under the rallying cry, “ἀνακάθαρσις τῶν παλαιῶν νόμων” (purification of the old laws).²³ Yet the Old Testament body of thought did not disappear from Byzantine juridical texts after this period, as can be inferred from the numerous biblical quotes in the proimien to imperial documents from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries.²⁴ The first sentence from an amendment enacted in 1158 by Emperor Manuel I Komnenos represents a prime example, “Ἄδικίαν ἐμίσησα καὶ ἐβδελυξάμην, τὸν δὲ νόμον σου ἠγάπησα”²⁵ [“I abhor falsehood, but I love the law,” Ps. 118: 163].

The reception of Mosaic law that occurred in the manner described above in no way meant that the Christian subjects of the Byzantine emperor had gathered their Jewish contemporaries to their bosoms. The opposite was in fact true: The Jews were no longer considered

²² Pieler, “Das Alte Testament,” 110–1.

²³ P. E. Pieler, comp., “Ἀνακάθαρσις τῶν παλαιῶν νόμων und makedonische Renaissance,” *Subseciva Groningana* 3 (1989): 61–77.

²⁴ H. Hunger, comp., *Prooimion. Elemente der byzantinischen Kaiseridee in den Arengen der Urkunden*, Wiener byzantinistische Studien, 1 (Vienna, 1964), 197–203.

²⁵ R. Macrides, “Justice under Manuel I Komnenos. Four Novels on Court Business and Murder,” *Fontes Minores VI*, Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte, 11 (Frankfurt a.M., 1984): 99–204, esp. 118, 9.

to be the "chosen people." As long as the persecution of Christians had continued, there existed a certain analogy between the continuously threatened Old Testament people of Israel and the Christians threatened by the pagan world. Following the autarchy of Constantine the Great, however, Eusebius of Caesarea constructed a transference of the function from the Israelites, as the bearers of God, to the Byzantine Rhomaioi within the context of his political theology. The manner in which Eusebius's church history was interpreted can be seen in the following:²⁶ the Constantinian court bishop considered the Roman Empire under the rule of Constantine, the "friend of God," to be the endpoint of development and allowed the correct veneration of God to appear as a criterion for being chosen. This correct worship of God according to the text, was founded by Abraham for his family, conveyed by the Law of Moses in the Old Covenant to the Jewish people, and finally transferred to the Christians by Jesus. By means of the Constantinian conversion, Abraham's veneration of God became in the form proclaimed by Jesus to the world, the correct worship of God, which was practiced throughout the entire inhabited world, the *Oikumene*. After Abraham's family and after the Jews, the Christians had now stepped into the function of the chosen people, whereby the Roman people and the Christian people had coincided into a single unit through Constantine's efforts.²⁷

This concept of a new chosen people is not only expressed in literary sources, but also in imperial documents. A characteristic example is presented in the first sentence of a chrysobull enacted in July 1049 by Constantine IX Monomachos:

Τὸν παλαιὸν Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ὁ μέγας βασιλεὺς καὶ Θεὸς παρωσάμενος τὸν νέον ἐξελέξατο καὶ τοῦτον ἐκείνῳ προκρίνας λαὸν περιούσιον καὶ μερίδα ἐπιθυμητὴν καὶ κληρὸν οἰκεῖον αὐτῷ ὀνόμασεν. Ἐνθεν τι καὶ τῷ χριστιανῷ φύλῳ τὸ ἰουδαϊκὸν καθυπέταξε καὶ τὸ πιστὸν καὶ εὖνον γένος τοῦ ἀπίστου κατάρχειν καὶ ἀγνώμονος ὀκονόμησε.²⁸

[The mighty King and God rebuffed the old Israel and selected a new one, and by giving His preference to this one before the other, He called it the chosen people and His desired, own inheritance. In this respect, he at the same time subjected the Jewish people to the Christian people, and

²⁶ See E. von Ivanka, *Rhomäerreich und Gottesvolk* (Freiburg, 1968), 49–61.

²⁷ Pieler, "Das Alte Testament," 108.

²⁸ K. N. Kanellakis, *Χιακὰ ἀνάλεκτα* (Athens, 1890), p. 550. Comp. with Hunger, *Prooimion*, 201.

so arranged it, that the religious and well-intentioned race ruled over the unfaithful and ungrateful one.]

In this context, Constantinople is praised as a “New Zion” (Νέα Σιών); this designation of the capital developed into a topos in all literary genres of the middle and late Byzantine epoch.²⁹ The same was true for imperial documents as well. The well-known and exact quote from the Prophet Zephaniah (3:14) comes at the head of a chrysobull that Emperor Michael VIII enacted between 1268 and 1271, that is, after the restoration of Byzantine rule in Constantinople:

Χαίρε σφόδρα θύγατερ Σιών· εὐφραίνου θύγατερ Ἱερουσαλήμ· περιεῖλε Κύριος τὰ ἀδικήματά σου· λελύτρωταί σε ἐκ χειρὸς ἐχθρῶν σου, καὶ οὐκ ὄψει κακὰ οὐκέτι. Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ἐπάξει ἐπὶ σὲ εὐφροσύνην καὶ καινιεῖ σε ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἑορτῆς.³⁰

[Rejoice in your heart, daughter of Zion, exultant daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has turned away the injustice that befell you; he has freed you from the hands of your enemies and you will never again experience evil. God the Lord will bring rejoicing upon you and will renew you like on the festival day.]

The situation described above led to an apparent contradiction: While Israel's legitimate past was necessary as a foundation for the legitimation of imperial rule in the *res publica christiana*, the contemporary Jewish people, the previous “chosen people,” were viewed as usurpers of the title. Also, because the Jews had no legal position in a Byzantine society structured along Christian lines, the legislator repeatedly limited their rights.³¹ In addition, the original religiously motivated antipathy towards the Jews was increased, in that they were blamed for an extremely misanthropic activity, one that was condemned by secular as well as by religious law, namely the devotion to the magical arts. In hagiographic literature, the Jews were often represented as skilled in magic to a considerable degree or they appear as servants of the devil. As such, they function as facilitators in the negotiations that the devil occasionally led. The story of the Oikonomos [steward] Theophilos, composed in its original version between 650 and 850 C.E., is

²⁹ A selection of more pertinent evidence was compiled by E. Fenster, *Laudes constantinopolitanae*, *Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia*, 9 (Munich, 1968), 61, 102, 106, 109, 114–115, 121, 135, 159–160, 170, 177, 211, 214, 250, 280, 284, 317, 323.

³⁰ I. et P. Zepos, *Jus graecoromanum*, Vol. 1 (Athens, 1931, reprint. Aalen, 1962), 659.

³¹ K. L. Noethlichs, comp., *Das Judentum und der römische Staat: Minderheitenpolitik im antiken Rom* (Darmstadt, 1996), 100ff.

very informative in this regard. It concerns the following: the Bishop of the City of Adana in Cilician died and the Metropolitan [provincial bishop] decided to appoint Theophilus, the steward of the diocese, to the office of bishop. Because, however, Theophilus declined with the justification that he was unworthy of the bishop's office, the Metropolitan selected someone else. The new bishop believed the slanders cast by Theophilus's enemies upon his faith, and removed Theophilus from his office. Thereupon:

Θεωρήσας οὖν ὁ ἀεὶ πολεμῶν τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ φθονήσας τὰς αὐτοῦ ἀρετάς, ὑποβάλλει αὐτὸν λογισμοῖς, ὥστε φαρμακοῖς προσομιλήσαι. Ἦν δέ τις ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ Ἑβραῖος, ἀκουστός πάνυ, τοῦ διαβόλου ὑπουργός· πρὸς τοῦτον ἀπέρχεται ἐν νυκτὶ καὶ κρούει εἰς τὸν πυλῶνα αὐτοῦ. Ὁ δὲ ὑπακούσας ἐξέρχεται θέλων τὸν κρούσαντα ἰδεῖν. Καὶ ἰδὼν τὸν ἄνδρα φόβῳ συσχεθεὶς ἐξεπλόγη (...) καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· τίς ἡ αἰτία, δέσποτα, τῆς σῆς ἀφίξεως; Ὁ δὲ εὐθέως ρίπτει ἑαυτὸν εἰς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ, παρακαλῶν ἅμα καὶ ἐξηγούμενος τὰ συμβάντα αὐτῷ καὶ λέγων· εἴ τι δύνασαι, βοήθει μοι καὶ μὴ παρίδης με τὸν ἐν πολλῇ θλίψει ὑπάρχοντα, συνταξάμενος αὐτῷ καὶ θεραπείαν δοῦναι ἱκανήν. Εἶπε δὲ ὁ ἀποστάτης Ἑβραῖος αὐτῷ· τῇ ἐπερχομένῃ νυκτὶ μεσονύκτιον ἔλθε πρὸς με, καὶ ἀπαγάγω σε πρὸς τὸν πάτρωνά μου, καὶ βοηθήσει σοι ἐξάπαντα. Καὶ μηδὲν ῥαθυμῆσης. Ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας τῶν λόγων καὶ περιχαρῆς γενόμενος, ἐποίησεν, ὡς προσετάγη, καὶ τῇ ἐπιούσῃ νυκτὶ πάλιν παραγίνεται πρὸς τὸν Ἑβραῖον. Ὁ δὲ λαβὼν αὐτὸν ἀπῆλθεν ἐν τῇ ἵπποδρομίᾳ τῆς πόλεως καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· εἴ τι ἂν ἴδης ἢ ἀκούσης μὴ δειλανδρήσης μηδὲ τὸν τύπον τοῦ σταυροῦ ἐν σεαυτῷ ποιήσης. Οὐ γάρ ἔστιν εἰς βοήθειαν ἀνθρώπων. ἀλλὰ πάντα χλεῦη καὶ ἀπάτη. Κἀκείνου συνθεμένου τοῦ τάλανος τούτῳ, ἐξαίφνης δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ φαντασίας τινάς, ἀνθρώπους χλανιδοφόρους φαινομένους καὶ φωνὰς ἀτάκτους ἀφέντας καὶ ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν τὸν ἄρχοντα τούτων καθήμενον. Ὁ δὲ παναγέστατος Ἰουδαῖος κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς τὸν ἀπὸ οἰκονόμων φέρει αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ μέσον τοῦ ὀλεθρίου συνεδρίου. Καὶ λέγει ὁ διάβολος τῷ Ἰουδαίῳ· τοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον τί ἡμῖν ἤγαγες; Ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· ἤγαγον αὐτόν, δέσποτά μου, πρὸς σὲ ἀδικούμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἰδίου ἐπισκόπου καὶ ζητοῦντα τὴν παρὰ σοῦ βοήθειαν. Ὁ δὲ εἶπε· ποίαν βοήθειαν ἔχω δοῦναι αὐτῷ δουλεύοντι τῷ θεῷ αὐτοῦ; Εἰ δὲ θέλει ἐμὸς εἶναι δούλος καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς καταταγῆναι, ἐγὼ βοηθῶ αὐτῷ, ὥστε πλεῖον ἢ πρότερον δύνασθαι καὶ κελεύειν πᾶσιν, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ αὐτοῦ. Τούτων οὕτως λεχθέντων λέγει ὁ Ἰουδαῖος τῷ οἰκονόμῳ· Ἦκουσας τί εἶπεν ὁ ἄρχων; Ὁ δὲ λέγει· καὶ ἤκουσα καὶ ποιήσω, εἴ τι κελεύει μοι, καὶ εὐθέως ἤρξατο καταφιλεῖν τοὺς πόδας τοῦ διαβόλου. Τότε ὁ διάβολος λέγει τῷ προδότῃ· ἀρνησάσθω τὸν Ἰησοῦν, τὸν υἱὸν τῆς Μαρίας, καὶ ἐκείνην (πάνυ γὰρ μυσάττομαι αὐτούς) καὶ ποιησάτω μοι τὴν ἄρνησιν αὐτοῦ ἔγγραφον, καὶ ὅσα θέλει, ἀνύει. Καὶ ἅμα τῷ λόγῳ δράσεται ὁ τοῦ γένους τῶν ἀνθρώπων πολέμιος τῶν γενεῶν τοῦ οἰκονόμου χαριέντος καὶ ἤρξατο καταφιλεῖν αὐτοῦ τὸ στόμα. Καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· χαῖρε, ἀπὸ τῆς νῦν γνήσιέ σου φίλε. Καὶ εὐθέως εἰσῆλθεν εἰς αὐτὸν ὁ Σατανᾶς.

[Then the eternal enemy of humanity, who observed this and begrudged him his virtues, made considerations available to him, to consort with magicians. Now, there was in that city a Hebrew, who was commonly known to be a servant of the devil. He went to this one in the night and knocked on his door. He heard it and came out because he wanted to see who knocked. And when he saw the man, he was gripped with fear and fell back (...) and said to him, "Lord, what is the reason for your visit?" That one threw himself forthwith at his feet, whereby he pleaded and revealed to him, what had befallen him and said, "If you are able to do something, then help me and do not ignore me, as I find myself in serious need." He also promised him a suitable reward. The apostate Hebrew spoke to him, "Come tomorrow night at midnight to me, then I will lead you to my patron; he will assist you in every way. Be of good cheer." As the other heard these words, he was very happy. He did as he had been told and found his way to the Hebrew at midnight. He took him and they went to the city's hippodrome and he said to him, "Whatever you see or hear, do not lose your courage and do not make the sign of the cross before you. Because it is not useful to people, but in this case is mockery and deceit." And as that unblest one had agreed to that, he suddenly showed to him all kinds of happenings, people who appeared wearing fine clothing and emitting confusing cries, and, sitting amidst them, their host. The damned Jew took the former Oikonomos by the hand and led him into the middle of the convocation of calamity. And the devil spoke to the Jew, "Why do you lead this man to us?" He answered and spoke, "I lead him, my Lord, to you, because he has been aggrieved by his bishop and seeks help from you." That one spoke, "What kind of help can I grant him, when he serves his God? If he will be my servant and join himself to my company, then I will help him so that he will have more than previously and command everyone, even his own bishop." This having been said, the Jew spoke to the steward, "Did you hear what the patron said?" He responded, "Yes, I heard it and I will also do it, whenever he gives me an order." And he began immediately to kiss the devil's feet. Then the devil spoke to his convert, "He must repudiate Jesus, the son of Mary, and her as well (because I cannot stand those two), and he must give me his repudiation in writing, then he will receive everything that he wants." And while he spoke, the enemy of humanity grasped the Oikonomos ingratiatingly by the beard and began to kiss him on the mouth, and he spoke to him, "Be welcome. From now on, you are my dearest friend." And immediately the Satan entered into him.]³²

The representation of a pact with the devil was a particularly popular motif in medieval folk literature and in modern folk belief; in

³² Text and [German] translation according to L. Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen zur Faustsage*, Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-historisches-Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, 206, app. 4 (Vienna, Leipzig, 1927), 164–9.

many cases, a magician and facilitator belongs to it. In the present case of Theophilus, it is noticeable that a Jew was chosen for the role of the facilitating magician. I excerpted the relevant portion of the text exactly, in order to show that the primary role of the Jew in the negotiations with the devil and in the conclusion of the pact appear particularly clearly in this version.³³

It is well known that in the combat for correctness of belief, the devil was accused of disseminating erroneous knowledge, for which he was made responsible for the origin of large heresies and connected with their originators. An ecumenical council that Emperor Justinian II had convoked in 691, in the cupola hall and therefore called the "Trullanum", dealt with the "eternal enemy", who had endeavored to destroy the peace and well being of humanity since the beginning of time. In the address by the 220 council fathers to the emperor, it was said, "Ἄλλ' ὁ ἀνθρωποκτόνος διάβολος (...) οὐκ ἀνήκε τὰ τῆς κακίας βέλη κινῶν καὶ τοὺς πιστοὺς τιτρώσκων τοῖς πάθεσιν."³⁴ [But the murdering devil (...) never ceased flinging arrows of evil and tormenting the believers with sorrows.] This council also distinguished itself from others by the canon enacted against magic. It is certainly no coincidence that as was previously mentioned and as can be inferred from the address to the emperor, the primary goal of the council was the eradication of the remnants of pagan and Jewish malice.³⁵

The next step would be the identification of the Jews with the devil. This took place under the following circumstances. In the eighth and ninth centuries, Iconoclasm shook the Byzantine church and the entire Byzantine empire, whereby the iconoclastic position of the Isaurian emperors not only had theological grounds, but was also politically motivated. The advocates of the iconodules did not fail to place the blame upon the devil for the confusion which reigned for over a century. By this means, a legend gradually developed about the origin of the prohibition of images and the destruction of the icons.

According to this legend, a gigantic Jewish magician offered the following pact to a Syrian (Arabian) caliph (this concerns an historical

³³ The Theophilus legend was transmitted in several versions, in which the Jew always appears, comp. the texts published by Radermacher, *ibid.*, 182–219.

³⁴ P.-P. Joannou, *Discipline générale antique*, vol. I/1, (Rome, 1962), 103, 11ff.

³⁵ "ἀλλὰ καὶ εἴ τι λείψανον ἑλληνικῆς ἢ ἰουδαϊκῆς σκαιότητος τῷ τῆς ἀληθείας ὀρίμῳ σίτῳ ἐγκαταμέμικται, ἐκ ρίζης αὐτῆς ὡς ζιζάνιον ἀρθεῖη." Joannou, *ibid.*, vol. I/1, 109, 16ff.

person, namely Yazid II (720–724)): he (the Jew) would guarantee the caliph dominion in his lands for 30 or even 40 years, if this person would eliminate the Christian images. The caliph accepted the offer, and the pact was concluded. The abolishment of images in the caliphate apparently prompted the Byzantine ruler to enact the same measure in his own kingdom.

In a monograph devoted to this legend, Paul Speck³⁶ proves that the description of the caliph applied to Emperor Constantine V, in particular as this member of the so-called “Isaurian” dynasty came from Syria. The colossal Jewish magician is the devil in person. The allegory thus is obvious: Iconoclasm goes back to a pact between the Isaurian emperor and the devil.

The original version of the legend under discussion appears to have been lost. Instead, it is transmitted in several later versions: among others in a (probably interpolated) report by John, Patriarch of Jerusalem at the fifth session of the Second Council of Nicaea,³⁷ in the *Chronographia* of Theophanes (although in much abbreviated form),³⁸ in the text directed against Constantine V (“*adversus Constantinum Cabalinum*”),³⁹ in the “Letter to Emperor Theophilos,”⁴⁰ and in the *Third Antirrhethikos* by Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople.⁴¹ Some of these texts are available in several editions.

Because the Jewish religion was incompatible with the political theory of the East Roman Empire (for the reasons mentioned above), the Jews were *personae non gratae* in Byzantium as long as they remained

³⁶ P. Speck, *Ich bin's nicht, Kaiser Konstantin ist es gewesen. Die Legende vom Einfluß des Teufels, des Juden und des Moslem auf den Ikonoklasmus*, Freie Universität Berlin. Byzantinisch-neugriechisches Seminar. ποικίλα βυξανιγά, 10 (Bonn, 1990). Comp. additionally about this legend, A. Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, vol. II (Athens, 2002), p. 162, fn. 101.

³⁷ J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. XII, col. 197 ff. Comp. Speck, as in footnote 9, p. 25ff.

³⁸ C. de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883; reprint. Hildesheim, New York, 1980), 401, 29–402, 18. Comp. bibliography and further parallel cases in, I. Rochov, *Byzanz im 8. Jahrhundert in der Sicht des Theophanes*, Berliner Byzantinistische Arbeiten, 57 (Berlin, 1991) 105ff.

³⁹ J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus omnium SS. patrum, doctorum scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum sive latinorum sive graecorum*. Series graeca, vol. 95, cols. 336B–344B. Comp. Speck, *ibid.*, 139ff., 321ff.

⁴⁰ Migne, *ibid.*, vol. 95, cols. 346–385 (356 ff.) and H. Gauer, *Texte zum byzantinischen Bilderstreit. Der Synodalbrief der drei Patriarchen des Ostens von 836 und seine Verwandlung in sieben Jahrhunderten*, Studien und Texte zur Byzantinistik, 1 (Frankfurt a.M., 1994). Comp. Speck, *ibid.*, 191ff., 449ff.

⁴¹ Migne, *ibid.*, vol. 100, cols. 488A–533A. Comp. Speck, *ibid.*, 263ff., 535ff.

faithful to their religion; therefore, the state constantly attempted to convert them to Christianity. As the historical sources report,⁴² a type of forced baptism of Jews occurred under Basileios I. Thereupon, Leon VI, the Wise, regulated the following through his amendment 55: “We now, as we find it good to complete that which our father neglected, allow that old law about the Jews to be silent, and they shall not dare to live otherwise than as the pure and salvific Christian belief claims. If, however, anyone is caught refraining from the Christian rules and turning anew to the customs and teachings of the Jews, then he shall suffer the punishment that the laws stipulate for apostates.”⁴³

In spite of this oppression, which took the form of actual persecution under certain emperors, the Jews, through their efficiency, ensured their position in society, in particular in the economic sector of the Byzantine cities.⁴⁴

⁴² See, e.g., Theophanes continuatus 5, 95 in Migne, *ibid.*, vol. 109, col. 357 B.C.

⁴³ “Ἡμεῖς οὖν ὅπερ ὁ ἡμέτερος πατὴρ εὐλόγον κρίναντες ἀναπληρῶσαι παντὶ νόμῳ ἀρχαιοτέρῳ τῷ περὶ ἑβραίων νομοθετοῦντι σιγὰν ἐπιτρέπομεν, καὶ μὴ ἄλλως αὐτοὺς τολμᾶν πολιτεύεσθαι ἢ ὡς ἡ καθαρὰ καὶ σωτήριος τῶν χριστιανῶν πίστις βούλεται. Εἰ δέ τις ἀλοίῃ τῶν μὲν χριστιανικῶν θεσμῶν ἀφιστάμενος, πρὸς δὲ τὰ ἰουδαίων ἐπαναστρεφόμενος ἔθῃ καὶ δόγματα, τοῦτον κατὰ τοὺς περὶ ἀποστατῶν ἐγκειμένους νόμους εἰσπράττεσθαι τὴν τιμωρίαν,” *Comp. the edition by P. Noailles, A. Dain, Les Nouvelles de Léon VI le Sage* (Paris, 1944), 211, ll. 16–22.

⁴⁴ *Comp. E. Kislinger, “Jüdische Gewerbetreibende in Byzanz,” A. Ebenbauer, Kl. Zatloukal, eds., Die Juden in ihrer mittelalterlichen Umwelt* (Vienna, 1991), 105–111.

THE LEGAL STATUS OF JEWS IN THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Amnon Linder

I. GENERAL¹

The legal status of the Jews in the Byzantine Empire was determined by the particular nature of that state—a Roman polity undergoing a process of Christianization. Two major forces interacted in its course: the Roman tradition in law, government, and societal self-perception, and the Christian drive to remold that society in accordance with an unequivocal Christian vocation. Christianization consisted, in this context, in the absorption of the Roman legacy by the Christian state, a long and complex process that was never fully completed. An immanent duality marked, therefore, Byzantine legal-political life, not unlike the iconic double-headed Byzantine eagle, though the relative strengths of the two forces, *Christianitas* and *Romanitas*, varied in time and circumstance. The legal status of the Byzantine Jews was determined by this process since Judaism inhered in both forces, in the Roman legal tradition and, to an even greater extent, in the Christian

¹ Footnote references have been limited to primary sources, mainly in order to reduce space. Readers are advised, therefore, to consult the following works for different historical perspectives and for bibliographical orientation to the relevant secondary literature: 1) J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641–1204*, (Athens, 1939); 2) A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade*, (New York, 1971); 3) S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium (1204–1453)*, (Alabama, 1985); 4) A. Linder, “The Legal Status of the Jews in the Roman Empire,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. IV, ed. S. T. Katz, (Cambridge, 2006), 128–73.

The Classical Roman legal texts have been quoted from the following editions: 1) *Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis, edidit adsumpto apparatus P. Kruegeri Th. Mommsen*, (Berlin, 1905), (= *CTh.*); 2) *Codex Justinianus, recognovit et retractavit Paulus Krüger*, (Berlin, 1929), (= *CJ.*); 3) *Digesta, recognovit Theodorus Mommsen, retractavit Paulus Krüger*, (Berlin, 1828), (= *Dig.*); 4) *Novellae, recognovit Rudolfus Schöll, opus Schöllii morte interceptum absolvit Guilelmus Kroll*, (Berlin, 1912), (= *Nov. Just.*). The Byzantine legal sources are quoted from editions referred to throughout the article. To facilitate further consultation of the quoted texts all citations from the Classical Roman legal sources are also given their references in A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, (Detroit, 1987), (= *JRIL*), while the Byzantine texts are given their references in A. Linder, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages*, (Detroit, 1997), (= *JLSM*). Both volumes provide bibliographical orientation for each source.

Weltanschauung—in a world perceived as the historical unfolding of God’s Economy of Salvation. As a sociological phenomenon, that legal status derived from the underlying legitimation of the Jews in the Byzantine Empire, i.e. from the social recognition that their presence conformed to the norms of the Byzantine state in its dual configuration, Roman as well as Christian. And *vice versa*: their legal status was diminished or entirely abrogated in close correlation with their illegitimation in regard to the same norms.

II. ROMAN PAGAN FOUNDATIONS

A. *General Characteristics*

The Roman pagan policy towards the Jews derived from the premise that “*Iustitia est constans et perpetua voluntas ius suum cuique tribuens*” (“Justice is the constant and perpetual will to render to everyone his right.”)² Jews were thus granted the right to maintain their peculiar identity, as individuals and as a national and religious entity. This was hardly unusual, for pagan Rome tended to identify common denominators across cultural differences and practically validate these differences, provided that they fell within the boundaries of the conventionally accepted deviation. Reducing natural heterogeneity to a universal Law of Nature and legal multiformity into the Law of Nations meant, in essence, recognizing natural as well as national-legal multiplicity, in the same way that the reduction of different cults into few prototypical cults and numerous deities into a handful of essentially exchangeable deities validated, in effect, religious peculiarities. Because the practice of Judaism by Jews was generally considered to fall within the boundaries of the accepted deviance it was granted the usual recognition, occasionally attended with hostility, mockery, ignorance, or indifference, but recognition nonetheless. Julian’s publicly declared intention to rebuild the Temple and restore the sacrificial cult in Jerusalem in the context of his grand pagan restoration is a telling example of that acceptance of Judaism into the pagan Big Tent.

Legitimizing the Jewish presence in the Roman state created, all the same, a highly ambiguous and potentially inflammable situation, for the Jews claimed both the right to engage in a broad range of activities

² *Inst.* I.1.

within the host society and the privilege to keep a significant portion of their life secluded from it. The Roman state managed this situation through a three-tiered legal system that administered three spheres of activity: Jewish participation in the general public arena, the separate field of specific Jewish action, and the interface between the two.

First and highest in this three-tiered system was the Common-law, based on the principles of personality and territoriality: it determined the status of the Jews as actors on the general legal stage. Their rights, duties, and scope of action derived both from their personal status (as citizens or otherwise, of either the local or the Roman civil communities) and from their domicile "within" a given legal system (in matters pertaining to public order and to their status as peregrines in relation to the citizenry). It regulated the life of the Jews in their non-Jewish capacity as members of any legally structured society they were domiciled in.

Jewry-law, a special law instituted by the host society, dealt with their Jewish specificity and consisted of dispositions that supplemented, adapted, and sometimes suspended the Common-law in its application to Jews. It thus created a particular arena in which the interaction of Jews with non-Jews and with the state could take place under the control of the state, functioning as an interface between the two societies and their particular laws, establishing special rights, duties, limitations, and means of legal redress. It essentially aggregated privileges in the technical sense of "laws enacted for the sake of individuals"³ and groups, in their favor or otherwise.

The third tier in this system consisted of the Jewish-law, the Halakhah. It covered those domains of Jewish life that the Common-law and Jewry-law did not manage, sometimes intentionally and through formally delegated jurisdiction, at other times through indifference, or because of the incompetence of government organs. In the areas of the Land of Israel that were densely populated by Jews, the Halakhah amounted to a substantial portion of the Common-law—aggregating both the personal statuses of the Jews living in those regions and the rights recognized to their national community. Jews in the Diaspora applied it voluntarily, in the main, submitting to it in their communal institutions and carrying it as their personal law into any legal

³ See Cicero's definition "in privatos homines leges ferri... id est enim privilegium" (*Leg.*, 3:19:44).

forum willing to accept it. The extraordinary growth and vitality of Jewish-law and of the institutions that created and applied it under the Roman Empire should be appreciated in light of this readiness of the Roman authorities to abstain from acting in areas and on matters left to the jurisdiction of the Jewish authorities.

This system was highly dynamic, and its interdependent components evolved in correlation with the changes in the legitimacy recognized to the Jewish presence in the Roman state. Weaker legitimacy induced the Jews to join the Common-law arena as ordinary, non-Jewish actors and to reduce, consequently, their recourse to the Jewish-law instances, while stronger legitimacy resulted in the inverse course. Pertinent changes were introduced into Jewry-law eventually, sooner or—in the best legal tradition—later, in relation to the changed rapport between the Common-law and the Jewish-law. The history of the legal status of the Jews in the Roman Empire is, consequently, the history of that three-tiered system.

B. Jewry-law in the Roman Legal System

Jewry-law in the pagan Roman state is known through a relatively modest number of official documents—a selection of some thirty documents (mainly Diaspora Jewry-law privileges) incorporated in Flavius Josephus's *Antiquitates*,⁴ hence prior to 94 C.E., and six jurisprudential texts and imperial rescripts dated to the second and third centuries C.E. and preserved, for the most part, in the *Justinian Corpus*. Non-legal sources provide supplementary evidence. This modest corpus allows us, nevertheless, to delineate the major contours of pagan Jewry-law.

It recognized the Jews throughout the Roman Empire as members of a distinct national entity, sharing common descent, customs/laws, a certain measure of communal autonomy, and their particular religion. Common descent appears as the predominant connotation in the Greek and Roman terms applied to Jews—*γενος*, *φυλον*, *gens*, *natio*—and, to a lesser extent, in *εθνος* as well. Their recognition as a nation entailed, in principle, the authorization to live according to their national law, i.e. the Mosaic Law. Jewry-law privileges from the pagan

⁴ A complete and commented edition is provided in M. Pucci Ben-Zeev, *Jewish Rights in the Roman World; The Greek and Roman Documents Quoted by Josephus Flavius*, (Tübingen, 1998) (henceforth *JRRW*).

era explicitly recognize, accordingly, the right of Jews to “live according to their customs,”⁵ “to follow their particular ordinances according to their ancestral law,”⁶ “to practice their particular customs and laws,”⁷ and decree that Jews are “not to be prohibited from practicing their customs.”⁸ Claudius declared, pompously yet authoritatively: “It is right and just that the Jews too should preserve their ancestral customs without any hindrance in the entire world ruled by us.”⁹

That principle implied the recognition of a certain Jewish legal autonomy, amply documented in the Land of Israel and—to a lesser extent—in some leading Diaspora communities such as Alexandria; it was put into practice, in all probability, in other Diaspora communities as well. The Jewish *politeuma* of Alexandria was apparently the complete model of such semi-autonomy: Strabo of Amaseia describes Jewish communities in general as “observing the ancestral Jewish-laws”¹⁰ and reports that the Jewish *Ethnarch* in Alexandria “governs the nation and adjudicates suits and supervises contracts and ordinances just as if he were the head of a sovereign state.”¹¹ Other sources confirm, indeed, that the Jewish *politeuma* of Alexandria operated its own network of social and legal institutions, obviously with the acquiescence of the state. It did not disappear until after Trajan (second century C.E.).

Religious matters were, however, the principal and constant object of Jewry-law privileges in the Diaspora, a strong indication of their permanent relevance to life in these communities and, at the same time, to the prevalence of conflicts on religious issues between Jews and non-Jews. For while the non-Jewish society generally tolerated Jewish religious practices as an accepted deviation, it frequently considered such practices, nonetheless, as falling dangerously close to the limits of that deviation, and sometimes well beyond. It tended to perceive the Jewish religion as essentially misanthropic, xenophobic, if not outright

⁵ “ζην κατα τα αυτων εθη” (*JRRW* no. 7, *Ant.*, 14:10:8).

⁶ “τους Ιουδαιους χρησθαι τοις ιδιοις θεσμοις κατα τον πατριον αυτων νομον” (*JRRW* no. 22, *Ant.*, 16:6:2).

⁷ “χρησθαι τοις ιδιοις νομοις και εθεσιν” (*JRRW* no. 27, *Ant.*, 16:6:7).

⁸ “μη κωλυεσθαι Ιουδαιους τοις αυτων εθεσι χρησθαι” (*JRRW* no. 18, *Ant.*, 14:10:21).

⁹ “καλως ουν εχειν και Ιουδαιους τους εν παντι τα υφ’ ημας κοσμω τα πατρια εθη ανεπικωλυτως φυλασσειν” (*JRRW* no. 29, *Ant.*, 19:5:3).

¹⁰ “τα συνταγματα των Ιουδαιων...χρωμενα τοις πατριοις των Ιουδαιων νομοις” (*Stern*, I., 278).

¹¹ “ος διοικει τε το εθνος και διαιτα κρισεις και συμβολαιων επιμελειται και προσταγματων, ως αν πολιτειας αρχων αυτοτελους” (*ibid.*).

inhumane and even atheistic; a fertile ground, therefore, for religious or ostensibly religious conflicts, and a compelling reason for the Jews to acquire privileges to protect them on this particular issue. In what seems to be a typical *cause celebre*, the Greek Ionians claimed in court that Jews cannot share with them citizenship (πολιτεια)—a situation they defined, significantly, as συγγενεια (kinship)—unless they also embraced their pagan religion. Marcus Agrippa found for the Jews, who “won the right to use their own [religious] customs”¹² regardless, manifestly, of their civic status, and although his verdict was ostensibly based on procedural rather than substantive grounds it resulted in a substantive recognition that citizenship was not incompatible with the Jewish religious practice. Religion usually appears in Jewry-law sources in close association with the generic “custom”: Jews were allowed “to practice their ancestral customs and rites,”¹³ “to observe the Sabbath and the other rites according to their ancestral laws,”¹⁴ to assemble in order “to pay to God their ancestral prayers and sacrifices/rites... according to the customs incorporated in laws,”¹⁵ to send “consecrated money” to the Temple “according to an ancient customary practice,”¹⁶ and, in another privilege, according to their “ancestral custom.”¹⁷ Claudius, again, formulated the general principle, declaring, in acceding to a petition concerning the paraphernalia of the High Priest, that his decision derived from his “piety and will that all should worship according to their ancestral [customs].”¹⁸ References to religion apart from custom appear in some ordinances, e.g., when “Jews... having Jewish rites and practicing them” obtain privileges “for the sake of religion,”¹⁹ and, again, when dealing with

¹² “και δικης... ενικησαν οι Ιουδαιοι... τοις αυτων εθεσι χρησθαι.” Recorded by Flavius Josephus following Nicolaus of Damascus, who appeared for the Jews in that trial (quoted from Stern, Vol. I, 238).

¹³ “τοις πατριους εθεσι και ιεροις χρησθαι” (JRRW no. 7, *Ant.*, 14:10:8).

¹⁴ “τα τε σαββατα... και τα λοιπα ιερα επιτελειν κατα τους πατριους νομους” (JRRW no. 17, *Ant.*, 14:10:20). A similar principle is enunciated in JRRW no. 19, *Ant.*, 14:10:23.

¹⁵ “κατα τα νομιζομενα εθη συναγωνται... επιτελοιεν τας πατριους ευχας και θυσιας τω Θεω,” (JRRW no. 20, *Ant.*, 14:10:24).

¹⁶ “δι’ αρχαιαν συνηθειαν” (JRRW no. 23, *Ant.*, 16:6:3).

¹⁷ “το πατριον αυτοις εθος” (JRRW no. 26, *Ant.*, 16:6:6).

¹⁸ “δια το εμαντου ευσεβες και το βουλευσθαι εκαστους κατα τα πατρια θρεσκευειν” (*Ant.*, 20:1:2).

¹⁹ “Ιουδαιους ιερα Ιουδαιικα εχοντας και ποιουντας... δεισιδαιμονιας ενεκα” (JRRW no. 11, *Ant.*, 14:10:13). Also JRRW no. 13, *Ant.*, 14:10:16; JRRW no. 15, *Ant.*, 14:10:18; JRRW no. 16, *Ant.*, 14:10:19.

persons guilty of stealing “consecrated money” who, though they have fled to a place of asylum, should be persecuted for “sacrilege.”²⁰

Other religious privileges, concerned mainly with the synagogue and the practices centered on it, survived the debacle of 70 C.E. and acquired even greater significance, given the transformation of the Jewish religion from a centripetal to a more multi-centered system. The synagogue functioned as the center of the community even before 70 C.E., but it emerged in the new environment as the main focus of social and religious cohesion throughout the Jewish world. The old Jewry-law privileges that guaranteed the rights to assemble in synagogues and carry out social and religious activities in their precincts were therefore of particular value. They validated the embryonic communal structure inherent in synagogal life, a structure manifested in its yearlong re-creation of a distinct national order through ritual and other social activities. Authorizing a synagogue was practically tantamount to warranting a community.

This traditional Jewry-law was temporarily dismantled during the Bar-Kokhba War of 132–135 and its immediate sequels. Hadrian’s campaign aimed at the complete annihilation of the national and religious identity of the Jewish population in the Land of Israel, and probably in the Diaspora as well. His legislation on Jewish matters, both in terms of general laws and local ordinances, was an attempt to abolish the Halakhah—i.e. the Jewish-law—as a living reality. Such were the ban on circumcision, the initiative to rebuild Jerusalem as pagan Aelia Capitolina and the ban on a Jewish presence in the city, the interdictions concerning holidays (*Hanukka*, *Sukkot*, and *Passover*) and essentially religious practices (*Tefillin*, *Mezuza*, *Tevillah*, *Terumah* and the Sabbatical Year), the closure of synagogues and schools (*batey-midrash*), the ban on ordination (*smicha*), and the cessation of all the legislative and juridical activities of the *Sanhedrin* and the *Patriarchate*. They all amounted to an abrogation of Jewish-law as a functioning social system and resulted, necessarily, in the practical cassation of the Jewry-law.

Some of the Hadrianic measures were mitigated or abolished within two decades of their promulgation, and, progressively, during the second half of the century. Under the Severi, however, the Roman government returned to the pre-Hadrianic model of the three-tiered

²⁰ “των...ιερων χρηματων... (οι ιεροσυλοι)” (*JRRW* no. 24, *Ant.*, 16:6:4).

system of law with its underlying perception of the religious essence of Judaism and recognition of Jewish-law. The highest and most visible Jewish-law institutions, the *Sanhedrin* and the *Patriarchate*, were not only restored but significantly reinforced, and their achievements in the *Mishnah* and in the *Jerusalemite Talmud* provide the best evidence of their restored vitality and relevance. The new Jewry-law presented, however, two new features that were destined to play an important role in the Roman legal legacy on the Jews: first, discriminatory adversative measures that enhanced, effectively, the recognition of the Jewish nation/religion; second, a new balance between the components of the three-tiered system, mainly due to an increased Common-law activity of the Jews that tended to pull them away from the Jewish-law into the Common-law arena.

The first of the discriminatory measures, a special Jewish poll-tax (*didrachmon*) was imposed in c. 70 C.E. on all Jews throughout the empire, men and women between the ages of three and seventy. Perceived as a payment to Jupiter Capitolinus, it replaced the annual half-shekel voluntary contribution to the Temple in Jerusalem, and was clearly designed to proclaim the national and religious subservience of the Jews to Rome and to the Roman state cult. A second Jewish tax—the “first fruits” (*aparchai*)—was added almost immediately, and both were consolidated toward the end of the century into one tax, the *Ioudaikon telesma*. It endured at least until the fourth century and probably much later. Its real value, traditionally fixed in nominal terms, was wiped out by inflation towards the end of the third century, but it was never abolished, for its value as a mark of infamy outlasted its fiscal worth. It established a legal precedent for fiscal impositions targeting only Jews, secretly managed, outside the regular fiscal practice and easily liable to abuse. Emperor Julian aptly characterized this type of taxation as “the worst burden of the yokes of slavery”²¹ and as “impiety derived from . . . infamy,”²² echoing Nerva’s declaration on the “*calumnia*” of the *Fiscus Iudaicus*.

Another discriminatory measure evolved from the Hadrianic ban on circumcision. That ban assimilated circumcision to the crime of castration, but it was mitigated under Antoninus Pius before c. 155. The

²¹ “Πάνυ υμιν φορτικωτατον γεγενηται . . . των ζυγων της δουλειας το διαγραφαις ακηρυκτοις υποπαττεσθαι” (*JRIL* No. 13, p. 156).

²² “το της τοιαντης δυσφημιας ασεβημα,” *ibid.*

new disposition, as recorded by the jurists Modestinus²³ and Paulus,²⁴ authorized the circumcision of Jews by origin and maintained the old ban in regard to all others, Roman citizens and non-citizens, freemen and slaves, practically outlawing proselytizing. It reaffirmed an official discriminatory and exclusionist posture against the Jewish religion/nation, but by legalizing circumcision for Jews by origin it clearly reinforced the traditional legal recognition of the identity between the Jewish nation and the Jewish religion.

While these measures resulted, in effect, in sustaining religious Judaism, the evolution of the Roman political and legal system towards increased unification and centralization produced the opposite effect. Official recognition of alien minorities was relatively simple in the heterogeneous Roman world under the Republic and the Principate: most of the provinces were characterized by relatively loose networks of disparate political, administrative, cultural, and national elements structured around numerous and frequently competing foci of power and authority, and the Jews fitted fairly easily into this overall multiformity. The advanced homogenization of the empire, however, transformed it into a better integrated and regimented society, in the political arena by the end of the third century, and in other spheres of life during the fourth and the fifth. Recognizing the alien Jewish minority in this general environment clearly went against the grain, and it became increasingly difficult, certainly in the long run and as long as the empire managed to preserve its homogeneity.

The crucial step in this direction was taken when the Jews were given Roman citizenship in 212: from now on they were expected to undergo the duties and enjoy the rights of their new status, and they certainly did, to a considerable extent. Self-interest and duty alike turned them away from the Jewish-law towards the Common-law, in a process that opened new potentialities for conflict and required new Jewry-law initiatives. Even before 212 Jews were allowed to enter—even pressed—into municipal government, and as citizens they were certainly entitled to join state government offices. This in itself was not unattractive to some, for holding public office was still generally seen as a sign of status and as a necessary prerequisite for social and political advancement. Others, though, recoiled from the financial burdens

²³ *JRIL* no. 1 (*Dig.* 48:8:11), 99–102.

²⁴ *JRIL* no. 6 (Paulus, *Sententiae*, 5:22:3–4), 117–20.

and legal liabilities involved in taking office, and looked for ways of evading these civic duties—in the Jewry-law, in the first place.

A more ominous prospective implicit in the new civic status of the Jews concerned its pagan aspects. Roman and Hellenistic civic culture comprised state and city cults, pagan by definition, whose role became increasingly significant in the third century. Cults incumbent on all citizens were now dedicated not only to the state tutelary deities but also to the ruler in person, perceived as divine or at least as invested with a divine authority and power. The Christians, lacking a legal protective barrier similar to the Jewry-law to shield them from civic duties they considered sacrilegious, were duly prosecuted, while the Jews turned to the Jewry-law for remedy. Septimius Severus and Caracalla—as early as 196–211—recognized the right of the Jews to enter public office (*honores*) and to discharge *liturgies* on condition that these “should not transgress their religion,”²⁵ according to the jurist Modestinus. It was Modestinus, again, who formulated the general norm in this matter about a decade or so later (hence subsequent to the universal grant of citizenship), while considering the Jews’ capacity to undertake the *liturgy* of guardianship to non-Jews. He determined that they could and should, “just as they shall serve in other *liturgies*: for the laws command that they should not be vexed by those *liturgies* only that seem to transgress their religion,”²⁶ an eloquent evidence to the tenacity of the traditional Jewry-law principle that the Jewish religion should be protected by the state, in this case against Common-law dispositions.

Exemption from office and *liturgies* through the ‘privilege of religion’ was no doubt put into practice quite extensively, on authentic religious grounds but also as means of evasion from state and city obligations. In a law promulgated in 321 Constantine recognized, in fact, that “in the past an ancient custom”²⁷ gave the Jews immunity from curial offices, and he preserved this exemption on a much limited scale as a “vestige,” for two or three Jews in each curia. Jewry-law on this matter obviously strengthened the Jewish-law by turning it into a

²⁵ “sed et necessitates eis imposuerunt, qui superstitionem eorum non laederent” (*Dig.* 50:2:3:3, *JRIL* no. 2, pp. 103–7).

²⁶ “ὡσπερ και λοιπα λειτουρησουσιν’ αι γαρ διαταξεις μονοις ανενοχλητους αυτους ειναι κελευουσιν, δι’ ων η θρησκεια χραινεσθαι δοκει.” (*Dig.* 27:1:15:6, *JRIL* no. 4, pp. 110–3).

²⁷ “pristinæ observationis” (*CTh.* 16:8:3, *JRIL* no. 7, pp. 120–4).

haven of immunity, until this channel of evasion was effectively closed in 321.

III. JEWRY-LAW IN THE EARLY BYZANTINE PERIOD

The first three 'Christian Centuries' of the Roman Empire, from Constantine the Great to Justinian, represent a remarkable continuity of the traditional three-tiered system, with the same postulate of the religious nature of Judaism and a similar legislative inconsistency. Like their pagan predecessors, the early Byzantine emperors assigned and re-assigned the Jews alternately to the Common-law and the Jewish-law as their obligatory legal arenas. Christian values and goals were gradually introduced into the overall legal system during this period, but their impact on Jewry-law was, at first—during the fourth century—mainly sectoral, evident in the management of relations between Christians and Jews but absent from the bulk of the Jewry-law which regulated the relations between the Jews and the polity; such relations were still dominated, consequently, by the old Roman norms. This situation changed dramatically during the fifth and the sixth centuries, with the progressive transformation of Christianity from a religious minority into an Established Church and with its increasing role in determining Jewry-law.

The additions to Jewry-law during these first three 'Christian centuries' can be classified under the following headings: 1) jurisdiction; 2) self-government; 3) state and municipal government; 4) religion; 5) protection. They are documented in the *Theodosian* and the *Justinian Codes* as well as in some *Extravagant* legislation preserved on the margins of these two corpora.

A. Jurisdiction

The first normative statement in Byzantine law on the legal status of the Jews as Roman citizens appears in a law promulgated by Arcadius in 398.²⁸ From the premise that the Jews "live under the Roman common law"—and the *Interpretatio* to the *Theodosian Code* explicates here "All the Jews, who are known to be Romans"²⁹—Arcadius

²⁸ *CTh.* 2:1:10 = *CJ.* 1:9:8 (*JRIL* no. 28, pp. 204–11).

²⁹ "Iudaei omnes, qui Romani esse noscuntur," *Op. cit.* p. 208.

deduced that they were subject to the ordinary Roman court in all matters concerning “forum et leges et iura,” (“court, laws, and rights”) and that all of them should litigate before that court in the ordinary way “under the Roman laws; in conclusion, they should be subject to our laws.”³⁰ Excepting, nevertheless, those matters that concern “their superstition,” and the *Interpretatio* explicates, again: they “shall litigate before the *Heads* of their religion only on what concerns the discipline of their religion, so that they shall observe among themselves what was established in the Hebrew laws.”³¹ The Jewish court was allowed non-religious jurisdiction—and in civil cases only—as a court of arbitration, and as such its verdict was enforceable by the state. Conditions prior to this law (and even later, due to inefficient implementation) were obviously quite different, and the Jewish authorities had probably exercised judicial powers over Jews—notwithstanding their Roman citizenship—and in certain circumstances over non-Jews as well, in a wide variety of cases. In a law from 415, for example, Theodosius II prohibited the *Patriarch* from judging cases between Jews and Christians, reserving such cases to the ordinary judges.³² The religious jurisdiction of the Jewish authorities, on the other hand, was confirmed in 392: the Jewish *Primates*, the law declares, “are manifestly authorized to pass judgment concerning their religion, under the authority of the...*Patriarchs*.”³³ In 397 Arcadius practically directed the Jewish office-holders in the communities to “obey their laws,”³⁴ meaning, undoubtedly, religious laws; and ‘obedience to the laws’ entailed, necessarily, administering justice under these laws. A dual judicial regime was thus established for the Jews, though the deceptively neat distinction between “Jewish religion” and “Roman law” was difficult to apply, and further legislation was required to deal with uncertain legal cases and to determine on which side of that divide they fall—the Jewish or

³⁰ “adeant sollemni more iudicia omnesque Romanis legibus inferant et excipiant actiones: postremo sub legibus nostris sint.” Op. cit., p. 207.

³¹ “hoc solum apud religionis suae maiores agant, quod ad religionis eorum pertinet disciplinam, ita ut inter se, quae sunt Hebraeis legibus statuta, custodiant,” Op. cit., p. 208.

³² *CTh.* 16:8:22 = *CJ.* 1:9:15 (*JRIL* no. 41, pp. 267–272). In the Justinianean version the *Patriarch* was replaced by ‘seniores Iudaeorum.’

³³ “manifestum est habere sua de religione sententiam,” (*CTh.* 16:8:8, *JRIL* no. 20, p. 187; see pp. 186–9).

³⁴ “pareantque legibus suis” (*CTh.* 16:8:13, *JRIL* no. 27, pp. 201–4).

the Roman. Marriage customs, for example: Theodosius I legislated on this matter in 393, prohibiting the Jewish customs and laws on marriage, polygamy in particular.³⁵

That legal confusion continued under Justinian. On the one hand, he transformed the 398 law into an instrument of dissolution of the Jewish judiciary with an editorial sleight of hand:³⁶ while Arcadius removed religious cases from the ordinary Roman jurisdiction, resigning them implicitly to the Jewish authorities, Justinian read in that text an explicit committal of all cases—religious as well as non-religious—to the ordinary Roman courts. At the same time he considerably diminished the Jews' legal capacity to act in the Common-law arena by disqualifying them in 531 from giving evidence against Orthodox litigants in trials in which one party, at least, was Orthodox. Jews and certain categories of heretics were qualified to give evidence in trials among themselves, and in matters pertaining to testaments and contracts.³⁷ Justinian restated this policy in a response to a query from the *Praefectus-Praetorio of the East* in 537, and determined that Jews, Samaritans, and heretics were allowed to testify against Orthodox defendants accused of illegally evading their curial duties, explaining—tongue in cheek—that they testify in this matter in favor of the Orthodox state, “so those who testify for it testify for the Orthodox.”³⁸

In regard to the Jewish-law, Justinian maintained Theodosius I's prohibition of the Jewish marriage customs. That law was transmitted only in his *Code*,³⁹ and the exemption from punishments on “illicit marriages” he granted to the Jews of Tyre in 537⁴⁰ is a telling evidence of its actual application. A certain Jewish jurisdiction is indicated, on the other hand, by the sole paragraph Justinian received in his *Code* from the demotion-decree of Gamaliel VI in 415,⁴¹ prohibiting the

³⁵ *CJ.* 1:9:7 (*JRIL* no. 22, pp. 191–3).

³⁶ The Theodosian text “in his causis, quae non tam ad superstitionem eorum quam ad forum et leges ac iura pertinent... adeant sollemni more iudicia [etc.]” reads in the *Justinian Code*—after a simple excision of “non”—as follows: “in his causis, quae tam ad superstitionem eorum quam ad forum et leges ac iura pertinent... adeant sollemni more iudicia [etc.]” (*CJ.* 1:9:8, *JRIL* no. 28, p. 209).

³⁷ *CJ.* 1:5:21 (*JRIL* no. 60, pp. 371–5).

³⁸ “τους δε υπερ τουτου μαρτυρουντας υπερ ορθοδοξων ποιεσθαι μαρτυριαν.” (*Nov. Just.*, no. 45, *JRIL* 64, pp. 393–8).

³⁹ *CJ.* 1:9:7 (*JRIL* no. 22, pp. 191–3).

⁴⁰ *Nov. Just.* no. 139 (*JRIL* no. 63, pp. 389–92).

⁴¹ *CJ.* 1:9:15 (*JRIL* no. 41, p. 270).

Jewish *seniores* from trying mixed cases between Jews and Christians—to be settled by the “ordinary judges”—and implying, in fact, that they legally possessed this authority in other cases, between Jews, in the first place.

B. *Self-Government*

Early Byzantine Jewry-law continued the third-century policy of recognizing the Jewish communities as corporate entities. In a rescript from 213 Caracalla designated the Jewish community in Antioch⁴² as “*universitas Iudaeorum qui in Antiochensium civitate constituti sunt*” (“the commonality of the Jews who are established in the city of the Antiocheans”), a clear reference to a legally constituted organization. The existence of legally recognized Jewish communities as late as 390 is demonstrated by a law from that year, in which Theodosius I proclaimed the illegality of imposing maritime transport duty on the Jewish and Samaritan communities in Egypt.⁴³ Highly significant in this regard are, first, his use of the term ‘*corpus*,’ synonymous to ‘*collegium*,’ and second, the normative argument adduced in that context, contrasting ‘*universum corpus*’ with ‘*personae*.’⁴⁴ This law did not survive Justinian’s codification. Another reference to the legal self-government of the Jewish communities is found in a law from 396⁴⁵ that guaranteed the Jews throughout the empire against the appointment of non-Jewish price controllers and supervisors for their merchandise, a function it attributed expressly to ‘the Jews’ and their *proceres*. The premise adduced in this law is practically identical to the definition of ‘justice’ in Justinian’s *Institutes*.⁴⁶

Legal recognition of the community entailed, by right, confirmation of its self-governing organs: fourth-century Jewry-law placed them under the supreme jurisdiction of the *Patriarch*, anchored them on the synagogues, and allotted them specific areas of action—religious cult and jurisdiction, certain economic activities, and internal Jewish taxation. The extant legislation throws only incidental light on the actual

⁴² *CJ.* 1:9:1 (*JRIL* no. 3, pp. 107–10).

⁴³ *CTh.* 13:5:18 (*JRIL* no. 19, pp. 182–5).

⁴⁴ “*quidquid enim universo corpori videtur indici, nullam specialiter potest obligare personam.*”

⁴⁵ *CTh.* 16:8:10 = *CJ.* 1:9:9 (*JRIL*, no. 23, pp. 194–5).

⁴⁶ Any person exercising this usurped function is to be persecuted “*velut aliena appetentem.*”

working of this system, providing nomenclature rather than factual descriptions of offices, and fragmentary references in place of complete delineations of chains of command and modes of action over time: but even these prove an active, structured self-government fully endorsed by the state. Bestowing on the office-holders special privileges, particularly exemptions from *liturgies*, further highlighted that official validation.

Two laws, from 320 and 397, allow a somewhat broader insight into the official policy on Jewish self-government throughout the fourth century. Constantine defined the Jews in 320⁴⁷ as *secta*, employing the term, presumably, in its original sense of a religious or philosophical ‘school,’ a system of ideas or way of life, general enough to be applied to the Jews, the Epicureans, or even to Christians, and still devoid of its later predominantly sinister connotation of a Christian heresy. He recognized the governance according to “the law” within that “sect” by “those who dedicated themselves to the synagogues of the Jews, to the *Patriarchs* and the *Presbyters*.” A second version of the same law designated the local office-holders as “Priests, *Archysynagogues* and others.” Arcadius reaffirmed the same policy in 397,⁴⁸ with a stronger emphasis, though, on the cultic aspect⁴⁹ of the Jewish community and on the governmental character of the administration headed by the *Patriarch* (“*Archysynagogues*, *Fathers of Synagogues*, *Presbyters*, and others”).⁵⁰

The principle that all communal office-holders were subordinate to the *Patriarchs* was enunciated already by Theodosius I in 392,⁵¹ and again by Arcadius in 404.⁵² Jewry-law endorsed, in this way, a Jewish self-governing system throughout the empire under the *Patriarchs*, whose personal status was officially determined “at the pinnacle of dignities” (“[in] *fastigio dignitatum*”), to quote Theodosius II in the matter of Gamaliel VI’s demotion in 415, through bestowal of titles such as *spectabilis*, *clarissimus* and *illustris* as well as that of *Honorary*

⁴⁷ *CTh.* 16:8:2 + *CTh.* 16:8:4 (*JRIL* no. 9, pp. 132–8).

⁴⁸ *CTh.* 16:8:13 (*JRIL* no. 27, pp. 201–4).

⁴⁹ “*Iudaei sint obstricti caerimoniis suis... qui in eius sacramento versantur.*”

⁵⁰ “*qui inlustrium patriarcharum dicioni subiecti sunt.*”

⁵¹ “*primatibus suis, quos virorum clarissimorum et inlustrium patriarcharum arbitrio manifestum est habere sua de religione sententiam.*” (*CTh.* 16:8:8, *JRIL* no. 20, pp. 186–9). Note the emphasis on their “religious” jurisdiction and the excommunication as a specific “religious” sanction.

⁵² “*Cuncta privilegia, quae viris spectabilibus patriarchis vel his, quos ipsi ceteris praeposuerunt... suum robur tenere censemus.*” (*CTh.* 16:8:15, *JRIL* no. 32, pp. 220–2).

Praefectus Praetorio.⁵³ As a *de iure* high-ranking imperial magistrate, the *Patriarch* benefited from various privileges, among them protection by the state judiciary against public defamation.⁵⁴ He also made use of a customary right⁵⁵ to raise a yearly tax (*Pensio, Anniversarium Canon, Aurum Coronarium*) from all the Jewish communities through the organs under his control. Chance references to an interdiction imposed in 399 on collecting this tax in the western part of the Empire⁵⁶ and its repeal in 404,⁵⁷ as well as the fiscal arrangements made in 429⁵⁸—following the demise of the *Patriarchate*—testify to the actual raising of this tax by the local communal officials, the synagogues serving as intermediate units of taxation,⁵⁹ and its transfer to the *Patriarchs* at the hands of *Apostoloi* on mission. The dissolution of the *Patriarchate* made no difference in regard to the actual collection: under Theodosius II the old system continued to operate, though closely controlled by imperial fiscal agents, and the proceeds were appropriated to the Treasury. Similar to the imposition of the Jewish poll-tax (*didrachmon*) under Vespasian, this internal Jewish tax was thus converted into a discriminatory state tax, and its value much increased in the process, for the amount formerly derived from the West was added to the base-assessment of the communities in the Byzantine East.

Justinian's policy on this subject is, once again, ambivalent. The inclusion in his *Code* of Caracalla's rescript from 213 on the Jewish community in Antioch⁶⁰ undermined Jewish self-government, for the ruling that the Antioch community could not claim a legacy in court implied, in the *Code's* normative frame of reference, a major legal incapacity, regardless of the particular circumstances that led to issuing this rescript in the first place. But several other texts reflect a different stance. Justinian revalidated the 396 law that prohibited the

⁵³ *CTh.* 16:8:22 (*JRIL* no. 41, pp. 267–72). All references to the Patriarch were omitted in the *Justinian Code* version of this law (*CJ.* 1:9:15). For references to the personal ranks of the *Patriarchs* see *CTh.* 16:8:8 from 392, *CTh.* 16:8:11 from 396, *CTh.* 16:8:13 from 397, *CTh.* 16:8:15 from 404.

⁵⁴ *CTh.* 16:8:11 from 396 (*JRIL* no. 24, pp. 196–7).

⁵⁵ “*ex consuetudine*” (*CTh.* 16:8:17).

⁵⁶ *CTh.* 16:8:14 (*JRIL* no. 30, pp. 215–7).

⁵⁷ *CTh.* 16:8:17 (*JRIL* no. 34, pp. 224–5).

⁵⁸ *CTh.* 16:8:29 = *CJ.* 1:9:17 (*JRIL* no. 53, pp. 320–3).

⁵⁹ “*a singulis synagogis exactam summam...reportent*” (*CTh.* 16:8:14); “*de synagogis omnibus...exigatur*” (*CTh.* 16:8:29).

⁶⁰ *CJ.* 1:9:1 (*JRIL* no. 3, pp. 107–10).

non-Jewish authorities from appointing price controllers to merchandise of Jews, reserving such appointments to the Jewish authorities (*Proceres*),⁶¹ and recognized, in another law, the *Seniores* of the Jews as an internal Jewish authority.⁶² Another text included in the *Code*⁶³ contains an explicit reference to the Jewish self-government organs under the *Primates* in connection with the collection of the *Aurum Coronarium* and constitutes, once again, a revalidation of their status. Justinian himself acknowledged the communal functions of *Archipher-ekitae*, *Presbyters*, and *Didascaloi* in a law from 553.⁶⁴

C. State and Municipal Government

The enrolment of the Jews in the state and the municipal administration still constituted a major Jewry-law topic in the fourth century. Constantine's first Jewry-law enactment in 321 laid down a clear norm: "we grant in a general law that the Jews shall be nominated to the curia," though he allowed a "vestigial," limited exemption,⁶⁵ which he extended in 330 to all office holders in the synagogues under the jurisdiction of the *Patriarchs*.⁶⁶ That status, subsequently corroborated by Constantius, Valentinian, and Valens,⁶⁷ endured until it was formally abrogated in 383.⁶⁸ Arcadius restored it again in 397, adducing three norms for his action: that "the Jews should be bound to their rites," that their ancient privileges should be conserved, and that the status of the Jewish 'clergy' should conform to that of the Christian clergy, pronouncing, finally: "Let them therefore be exempt even from the curial *liturgies* and obey their laws."⁶⁹ Honorius hastened to repeal this law in the western half of the Empire, and affirmed that "all who are obliged in any way to serve legally in the curia, no matter of whatever superstition they may be, shall be obliged to perform the *liturgies* of

⁶¹ *CJ.* 1:9:9 (*JRIL* no. 23, pp. 194–5).

⁶² *CJ.* 1:9:15 (*JRIL* no. 41, p. 270).

⁶³ *CJ.* 1:9:17 (*JRIL* no. 53, p. 322).

⁶⁴ *Nov Just.* no. 146, *JRIL* no. 66, pp. 402–11.

⁶⁵ "generali lege concedimus Iudaeos vocari ad curiam." (*CTh.* 16:8:3, *JRIL* no. 7, pp. 120–4).

⁶⁶ *CTh.* 16:8:2; 16:8:4 (*JRIL* no. 9, pp. 132–8).

⁶⁷ Not extant, but quoted in *CTh.* 16:8:13.

⁶⁸ *CTh.* 12:1:99 = *CJ.* 1:9:5 (*JRIL* no. 15, pp. 164–8).

⁶⁹ "Iudaei sint obstricti caerimoniis suis; nos...in conservandis eorum privilegiis veteres imitemur... perseverent ea, quae venerandae Christianae legis primis clericis sanctimonia deferuntur... Sint igitur etiam a curialibus muneribus alieni pareantque legibus suis." (*CTh.* 16:8:13, *JRIL* 27, pp. 201–4).

their cities.”⁷⁰ In later legislation Arcadius avoided any explicit reference to the curial exemptions of these office-holders,⁷¹ and confined himself to general statements: that all those Jews liable to the curial service should be compelled to discharge their duty (in 399)⁷² and that the privileges of the *Patriarchs* and the office-holders under their jurisdiction should be maintained (in 404).⁷³

Justinian re-issued the two jurisprudential texts in the *Digest*,⁷⁴ establishing both the Jews’ liability to undertake *liturgies* and their partial exemption on religious grounds, but received into his *Code* only three of the six texts available in the *Theodosian Code*, suppressing those that confirmed the curial exemptions⁷⁵ and maintaining their repeals.⁷⁶ He himself decreed in 537 that the Jews “shall serve as decurions even if they bitterly wail, and [they shall] be burdened with the curial *liturgies*... and no superstition shall discharge them from this order, for this is neither said in the old laws [sic!, A.L.], nor in the new”⁷⁷

Discharging curial *liturgies* could be seen as consistent, in principle, with the Roman recognition (since the second century C.E.) of the aptitude of the Jews—*qua* Jews—to undertake public office, but the expulsion of Jews from the office of *Executive Agents* by Honorius in 404⁷⁸ signaled an important change in this respect. They were shortly to be disqualified from practically all public service posts mainly by reason of their religion, as the rhetoric of these laws makes abundantly clear.⁷⁹ In 418 Honorius closed to the Jews three public service branches—the *Executive Agents*, the *Palatins*, and the Armed Service, although they were still allowed to serve in the municipal curias and

⁷⁰ “omnes, qui quolibet modo curiae iure debentur, cuiuscumque superstitionis sint, ad complenda suarum civitatum munia teneantur.” (*CTh.* 12:1:158; *CTh.* 12:1:157 = *CJ.* 10:32:49, *JRIL* no. 29, pp. 212–5).

⁷¹ As known from the fragments transmitted in the *Codex Theodosianus*, of course.

⁷² “Quicumque ex Iudaeis obnoxii curiae conprobantur, curiae mancipentur” *CTh.* 12:1:165 = *CJ.* 1:9:10 (*JRIL* no. 31, pp. 218–20).

⁷³ *CTh.* 16:8:15 (*JRIL* no. 32, pp. 220–2).

⁷⁴ *Dig.* 50:2:3:3 and 27:1:15:6 (*JRIL* no. 2, pp. 103–107, and no. 4, pp. 110–3).

⁷⁵ *CTh.* 16:8:3; *CTh.* 16:8:2 + 16:8:4; 16:8:13 (*JRIL* no. 7, pp. 120–124; no. 9, pp. 132–8; no. 27, pp. 201–4).

⁷⁶ *CTh.* 12:1:99 = *CJ.* 1:9:5; *CTh.* 12:1:157 = *CJ.* 10:32:49; *CTh.* 12:1:165 = *CJ.* 1:9:10 (*JRIL* no., 15, pp. 164–8; no. 29, pp. 212–5; no. 31, pp. 218–20).

⁷⁷ *Nov. Just.* no. 45 (*JRIL* no. 64, pp. 393–8).

⁷⁸ *CTh.* 16:8:16 (*JRIL* no. 33, pp. 222–4).

⁷⁹ See the quotes in the following references.

to practice law.⁸⁰ Valentinian III decreed in 425 another expulsion, from public service and from the bar.⁸¹ A comprehensive law of expulsion was given by Theodosius II in 438. It prohibited the Jews from holding posts of honor in the imperial and municipal administration but maintained their obligation to undertake the onerous curial duties.⁸² The motivation adduced was both religious and secular: "For we consider it impious that the enemies of the Supreme Majesty and of the Roman Laws shall be considered as vindicators...even of our laws...and...[that they] shall have the power to judge and pronounce sentence against Christians, very often against priests of the sacred religion, to the insult of our faith."⁸³ The Jews were excluded, consequently, on both counts—religious and secular—as enemies and alien to Christianity and to the Roman state. This law was received into the *Justinian Code*.⁸⁴

Almost a century later Justin and Justinian acknowledged that non-Orthodox—and Jews among them—had in fact "infiltrated" the public-service offices forbidden to them, and in 527 promulgated a new law that consolidated the different regulations into a coherent ensemble, spelling an almost total exclusion:⁸⁵ none of the heretics, the pagans, the Jews, and the Samaritans "shall share in any honor whatsoever, nor shall he put on an official belt, neither civil nor military, nor belong to any office, with the exception of the... *Cohortals*... we do not agree that...[they] shall share in the office of *Ekdikos* or... *City-Father*... neither do we allow them to be joined to the most learned advocates."⁸⁶ The two legislators insist that "there is absolutely nothing

⁸⁰ "In Iudaica superstitione viventibus... gentis huius perversitati devincti." (*CTh.* 16:8:24, *JRIL* no. 45, pp. 280–3).

⁸¹ "quibus Christianae legis nolumus servire personas, ne occasione domini sec-tam venerandae religionis inmutent. Omnes igitur personas erroris infausti iubemus excludi" (*Const. Sirmondiana* no. 6, *JRIL* no. 51, pp. 305–13).

⁸² *Theodosius II, Novellae*, no. 3 = *CJ.* 1:9:18 + *CJ.* 1:5:7 (*JRIL* no. 54, pp. 323–37).

⁸³ "Nefas quippe credimus, ut supernae maiestati et Romanis legibus inimici ultores etiam nostrarum legum...et...adversum Christianos et ipsos plerumque sacrae religionis antistites velut insultantes fidei nostrae...habeant potestatem." (*ibid.*, pp. 326–27).

⁸⁴ *CJ.* 1:9:18 (*ibid.* pp. 332–3).

⁸⁵ *CJ.* 1:5:12 (*JRIL* no. 56, pp. 356–67).

⁸⁶ "ουδεναν... ουτε μεθεχειν αξιωματος καθαπαξ ουδενος ουτε ζωνην περιβαλλεσθαι ουτε πολιτικην ουτε στρατιωτικην ουτε εις ταξιν τελειν ουδεμιαν πλην της των... κοορταλων... τους δε αυτους αιρητικους ουτε εκδικου ουτε πολεως πατρος μετιεναι φροντιδα συγχωρουμεν... ου μεν ουδε τοις σοφατατοις συντεταχθαι των δικων ρητορσιν αυτους εωμεν." (*ibid.* pp. 357–8).

new in this,” a clear reference to the fifth-century expulsion laws. They adduce religious motivation: the faithful shall be rewarded with “greater security, also honor and esteem”⁸⁷ while “it shall . . . be possible for all to perceive . . . that even what pertains to the human advantages is withheld from those who do not worship God rightfully.”⁸⁸

D. Religion

The official recognition of the religious essence of Judaism determined legislation on three predominantly religious issues: a) proselytizing and relations between Jews and Christians, b) synagogues, and c) holidays.

i. *Proselytizing and Relations between Jews and Christians*

The second-century general ban on circumcision of non-Jews by origin, practically a ban on proselytizing, remained prescriptive under the Early Byzantine Empire. Promulgated again by Constantine in 329⁸⁹ and by Justinian in the *Digest*,⁹⁰ it typified the official position on relations between Christians and Jews. Originally sectoral, taking cognizance of Christians and Jews but largely indifferent in regard to all others, it became more comprehensive with the advance of Christianization, binding on a larger proportion of the population and, finally, on society as a whole. The original sectoral perspective evolved gradually into an all-inclusive overview bearing on the entire polity. It was principally anchored on the idea that all interaction between Jews and Christians represents, in essence, a conflict between two competitive missionary drives, and that the role of the Christian state in this context was to promote and ensure victory to the Christian side through legal coercive means.

Hence the persistent preoccupation with the moving interface between the two religions, with those who cross over—proselytes to Judaism and converts to Christianity. The two complementary aims of deterring proselytism and promoting conversion were coupled already in Constantine’s law from 329,⁹¹ and subsequent legislation directed

⁸⁷ “ασφαλεια . . . μειζων και κοσμος και τιμη” (ibid. p. 357).

⁸⁸ “Αισθησθαι δε υπαρξει πασιν, . . . οτι τοις μη τον θεον ορθως προσκυνουσι και των ανθρωπινων αγαθων επεχεται.” (ibid.).

⁸⁹ *CTh.* 16:8:1 (*JRIL* no. 8, pp. 124–32).

⁹⁰ *Dig.* 48:8:11 (*JRIL* no. 1, pp. 99–102).

⁹¹ Above.

this two-barreled policy mainly at two groups, the Christians and the slaves owned by Jews. The law punished Christian proselytes to Judaism with confiscation of property in 353⁹² and again, with an unspecified sanction, in 383.⁹³ Honorius dealt with this matter in connection with the *Heaven-Worshippers* in 409. He defined Christian proselytes as those who “adopt the abominable and vile name of the Jews” and asserted: “for it is graver than death and crueller than massacre when someone abjures the Christian faith and becomes polluted with the Jewish incredulity.”⁹⁴ Their Jewish proselytizers were to suffer confiscation of property and perpetual exile according to a law from 423,⁹⁵ but that punishment was increased in 438⁹⁶ to death and confiscation. The same purpose was served by a legal procedure—reformed by Gratian in 383—for contesting testaments for cause of “desecration and desecration of the Christian religion ... [and passing] over to the sacrileges of the temples or to the Jewish rites or to the Manicheans’ infamy.”⁹⁷

At the same time, Jewish converts were given protection against persecution by their former co-religionists. Constantine affirmed in 329 that such converts are being attacked “by stoning or by other kind of fury... [as] we have learned is being done now,” and condemned the instigators and their collaborators to the stake.⁹⁸ He reiterated this disposition in 335.⁹⁹ Converts were also granted inheritance privileges in 426: they were not to be disinherited by their Jewish parents, and even parricide converts, while subject to the appropriate punishment, were still entitled to the obligatory Falcidian quarter of the inheritance, “in order that they shall be seen to merit this at least, in honor of the religion they have chosen.”¹⁰⁰ Justinian repeated the gist of that law in 527/8,¹⁰¹ and revalidated the 329 law in his *Code*.¹⁰² This intensive

⁹² *CTh.* 16:8:7 = *CJ.* 1:7:1 (*JRIL* no. 12, pp. 151–4).

⁹³ *CTh.* 16:7:3 = *CJ.* 1:7:2 (*JRIL* no. 16, pp. 168–74).

⁹⁴ “foedum... taetrumque Iudaeorum nomen induere... cum gravius morte sit et in initium caede, si quis ex Christiana fide incredulitate Iudaica polluat.” (*CTh.* 16:8:19, *JRIL* no. 39, pp. 256–62).

⁹⁵ *CTh.* 16:8:26 = *CJ.* 1:9:16 (*JRIL* no. 48, pp. 289–95).

⁹⁶ *Theodosius II Novellae*, no. 3 = *CJ.* 1:7:5 (*JRIL* no. 54, pp. 323–37).

⁹⁷ *CTh.* 16:7:3 = *CJ.* 1:7:2 (*JRIL* no. 16, pp. 168–74). Justinian omitted the Manichaeans.

⁹⁸ “saxis aut alio furoris genere, quod nunc fieri cognovimus” (*CTh.* 16:8:1 = *CJ.* 1:9:3, *JRIL* no. 8, pp. 124–32).

⁹⁹ *Const. Sirmondiana* no. 4 = *CTh.* 16:8:5 (*JRIL* no. 10, pp. 138–44).

¹⁰⁰ “ut hoc saltem in honorem religionis electae meruisse videantur” (*CTh.* 16:8:28, *JRIL* no. 52, pp. 313–9).

¹⁰¹ *CJ.* 1:5:13 (*JRIL* no. 58, pp. 368–89).

¹⁰² Above.

policy of encouraging conversion was, apparently, quite successful, but by drawing in unworthy as well as authentic converts it provoked a certain backpedaling. In 397 Arcadius barred Jewish false converts seeking church asylum against creditors or judicial proceedings, and laid down the rule that Jewish candidates for baptism should not be received before they had paid up their debts or had been acquitted in court.¹⁰³ His law was subsequently revalidated by Justinian.

This push-pull missionary policy further impacted on the legal status of the Jews in another important domain, conducting the state to prohibit mixed marriages between Jews and Christians. Theodosius I issued such an interdiction in 388, applying the penalties on adultery and allowing an unlimited right to prefer charges, although the current legal practice reserved this right to relatives only. Justinian received this law in his *Code*.¹⁰⁴ The general problem of mixed marriages between Orthodox and non-Orthodox spouses—bearing on heretics, pagans, and Jews—was addressed by Justin and Justinian in 527.¹⁰⁵ Such situations could arise, of course, as a result of the conversion of one spouse, with his partner persisting in the old faith. In disputes over the education of children that law awarded the determining voice to the Orthodox parent.

The second group aimed at by this policy comprised the non-Jewish slaves possessed by Jews. The impressive bulk, duration, and frequency of that legislation testify, in the main, to its permanent relevance in a society predominantly structured on the dichotomy liberty-slavery,¹⁰⁶ and to its application in the religious domain. These laws were intended, in the first place, to put an end to the proselytizing of non-Jewish slaves by their Jewish masters, probably a non-negligible channel of proselytizing, for it was sustained by missionary Judaism and made practically indispensable in Jewish households employing domestic slaves, due to the Jewish-law prescriptive system of purity (mainly dietary). That legislation was intended, at the same time, to entice new converts to Christianity by rewarding convert slaves owned by Jews with manumission, and by applying pressure on the Jews to convert and thus preserve their social status in a society that depended to a large

¹⁰³ *CTh.* 9:45:2 = *CJ.* 1:12:1 (*JRIL* no. 26, pp. 199–201).

¹⁰⁴ *CTh.* 3:7:2 = *CTh.* 9:7:5 = *CJ.* 1:9:6 (*JRIL* no. 18, pp. 178–82).

¹⁰⁵ *CJ.* 1:5:12 (*JRIL* no. 56, pp. 356–67).

¹⁰⁶ “Summa itaque divisio de iure personarum haec est, quod omnes homines aut liberi sunt aut servi” (*Dig.*, 1:3:1).

extent on servile labor and human capital. Disqualifying the Jews from owning non-Jewish slaves amounted in that context to a serious social disqualification, clearly a strong incentive to approach the baptismal font. Its evident radicalism—in subverting a major social institution in regard to an entire social group rather than isolated individuals—rendered it, understandably, extremely difficult to implement. Hence a large measure of compromise and willful negligence, legal chicanery and hair-splitting—hence, finally, the impressive bulk, duration, and frequency of that legislation.

It starts with Constantine. Referring in 335 to a previous law he had issued on this subject, he prohibited the circumcision by Jewish owners of any “Christian slave or of slave of any other sect whatsoever.”¹⁰⁷ In 339 Constantine II extended the prohibition to cover purchase, circumcision as well as the proselytizing of “a slave of another sect or nation,” Christian slaves and former bondwomen released from an imperial *gynaecium*.¹⁰⁸ The general ban was limited by Theodosius I in 384 to Christian slaves only,¹⁰⁹ and that interdiction was considerably adulterated—in 415, 417, and 423—when Honorius and Theodosius II permitted Jews to possess Christian slaves on certain conditions relating to the mode of their acquisition and, above all, to their liberty to keep their faith.¹¹⁰ Justinian revived the uncompromising policy in 527/534, when he prohibited all the non-Orthodox (the Jews explicitly named) to possess Christian slaves, manumitting such slaves and imposing on the owners heavy fines.¹¹¹ He reiterated this prohibition in 534, specifying that the manumission of slaves who preceded their masters to the baptismal font shall be guaranteed by both state and Church—an interesting echo of the legal complications that accompanied the actual enforcement of this policy and the growing role of the Church in it.¹¹² In a statement of principle issued in 535, when Orthodox government was reestablished in the newly conquered Province of Africa, he asserted: “We do not allow the Jews... to have Orthodox

¹⁰⁷ “Christianum mancipium vel cuiuslibet alterius sectae” (*Const. Sirm.* 4 = *CTh.* 16:9:1, *JRIL* no. 10, pp. 138–44).

¹⁰⁸ “mancipium sectae alterius seu nationis” ([*CTh.* 16:9:2 = *CJ.* 1:10:1] + *CTh.* 16:8:6, *JRIL* no. 11, pp. 144–51).

¹⁰⁹ *CTh.* 3:1:5 (*JRIL* no. 17, pp. 174–7).

¹¹⁰ *CTh.* 16:9:3 (*JRIL* no. 42, pp. 272–4); *CTh.* 16:9:4 = *CJ.* 1:10:1 (*JRIL* no. 44, pp. 277–9); *CTh.* 16: 9:5 (*JRIL* no. 48, pp. 289–95).

¹¹¹ *CJ.* 1:10:2 (*JRIL* no. 59, pp. 370–1).

¹¹² *CJ.* 1:3:54(56) (*JRIL* no. 61, pp. 375–81).

Christian slaves; for they have been warned of this in previous laws, and it is our intention to observe it undiminished.”¹¹³

ii. *Synagogues*

Byzantine Jewry-law on synagogues maintained their traditional recognition throughout the fourth century. As late as 368 (or 370, 373) Valentinian I and Valens exempted synagogues from the *Hospitality-duty* (*hospitium*) on the grounds that this duty was legally imposed on “houses of private persons, not on places of religion.”¹¹⁴ Theodosius I, furthermore, reaffirmed in 393 the right of the Jews to assemble in synagogues, and annulled all contrary interdictions, maintaining that “it is sufficiently established that the sect of the Jews is prohibited by no law.”¹¹⁵ References to the legally recognized status of the synagogues and to its religious rationale appear in laws promulgated to protect them against mob violence. Arcadius ordered in 397 that “synagogues should remain in their accustomed peace,”¹¹⁶ and Honorius (with Theodosius II) proclaimed under similar circumstances in 412 that synagogues should be protected “for all must retain what is theirs with unmolested right and without harm to religion and cult.”¹¹⁷ The turning-point—again, under the impact of Christian ideas—can be dated to 415, when the *Patriarch* Gamaliel VI was prohibited from founding new synagogues and ordered to destroy existing, deserted ones, provided that it could be done without disturbances. The new policy on synagogues, an impracticable and volatile amalgam of Roman tradition and Christian pietism, was legally formulated by Theodosius II in 423 and reiterated after six months and again in 438. It sought to establish a *status quo* situation: existing synagogues should

¹¹³ “Iudaeis...denegamus servos habere Christianos, quod et legibus anterioribus cavetur et nobis cordi est illibatum custodire, ut neque servos orthodoxae religionis habeant neque, si forte catechumenos accipiant, eos audeant circumcidere.” (*Just. Novellae*, no. 37, *JRIL* no. 62, pp. 381–9). Justinian broadens the scope of this policy to catechumens as well.

¹¹⁴ “privatorum domus, non religionum loca” (*CTh.* 7:8:2 = *CJ.* 1:9:4, *JRIL* no. 14, pp. 161–3).

¹¹⁵ “Iudaeorum sectam nulla lege prohibitam satis constat” (*CTh.* 16:8:9, *JRIL* no. 21, pp. 189–91).

¹¹⁶ “synagogas in quiete solita permanere” (*CTh.* 16:8:12, *JRIL* no. 25, pp. 197–8).

¹¹⁷ “cum sine intentione religionis et cultus omnes quieto iure sua debeant retinere.” (*CTh.* 16:8:20, *JRIL* no. 40, pp. 262–7).

be maintained in their present state and placed under state protection, but “no synagogue shall be constructed from now on.”¹¹⁸

Justinian revalidated the old exemption of the synagogues from the duty of *hospitium* with the implied recognition of synagogues as “*loca religionum*,”¹¹⁹ but insisted on the ban on constructing new synagogues and on augmenting existing ones, in the *Code*¹²⁰ and in laws he promulgated in 535¹²¹ and in 545.¹²² He intervened, in 553, in the matter of the languages and the translations of the Scriptures employed in the synagogal cultic activity, prohibited the study of the *Mishnah* and banned Sadducean opinions.

iii. *Holidays*

Sabbath and the Jewish holidays “on which the Jews keep the reverence of their cult”¹²³ were officially recognized as days of rest for the Jews in a law promulgated by Honorius with Theodosius II in 412.¹²⁴ They claimed that they were following “ancient custom and usage... [and that] it would seem that enough had been legislated on this matter in general constitutions by past emperors.”¹²⁵ On those specific days Jews were exempt from judicial summons, concerning public as well as private cases. An unidentified rescript, dating probably from the fourth century, furnished the complementary exemption from the performance

¹¹⁸ “Synagogas de cetero nullae protinus extruantur, veteres in sua forma permaneat.” (*CTh.* 16:8:25, *JRIL* no. 47, pp. 287–9). The immediate reiteration reproduced almost the same phrasing: “Quae nuper de Iudaeis et synagogis eorum statuimus, firma permaneat: scilicet ut nec novas umquam synagogas permittantur extruere nec auferendas sibi veteres pertimescant” (*CTh.* 16:8:27). The 438 law repeats the general prohibition and allows repair only on synagogues on the verge of immediate collapse—“ne qua synagoga in novam fabricam surgat, fulciendi veteres permissa licentia quae ruinam praesentaneam minitantur... Et qui synagogae fabricam coepit non studio reparandi.” (Theodosius II, *Novella* 3 = *CJ.* 1:9:18, *JRIL* no. 54, pp. 323–37).

¹¹⁹ *CJ.* 1:9:4 (*JRIL* no. 14, p. 162).

¹²⁰ *CJ.* 1:9:18 (*JRIL* no. 54, pp. 332–3).

¹²¹ *Nov. Just.* no. 37 (*JRIL* no. 62, pp. 381–9). This law instructs the Praefectus Praetorio of Africa to convert the synagogues into churches, a punitive measure due, undoubtedly, to particular local circumstances.

¹²² *Nov. Just.* no. 131, cap. XIV (*JRIL* no. 65, pp. 398–402).

¹²³ “Die sabbata ac reliquis sub tempore, quo Iudaei cultus sui reverentiam servant” (*JRIL* pp. 265–6).

¹²⁴ *CTh.* 16:8:20 + [*CTh.* 2:8:26 = *CTh.* 8:8:8 = *CJ.* 1:9:13] (*JRIL* no. 40, pp. 262–7).

¹²⁵ “At cum vero Iudaeorum... populo sacratum diem sabbati vetus mos et consuetudo servaverit... retro principum generalibus constitutis satis de hac parte statutum esse videatur.” (*JRIL* p. 264).

of personal *liturgies* on these holidays.¹²⁶ Justinian maintained the old exemption from personal *liturgies* and from legal summons on the Jewish holidays,¹²⁷ though he turned that text into a more balanced disposition by an interpolation that prohibited the Jews to summon Orthodox Christians on those same holidays.¹²⁸

The law imposed constraints on Jewish holidays in two cases. Theodosius II forbade in 408 any mockery of Christianity during the celebration of *Purim*, citing in particular the setting on fire of the crucified Haman “in contempt of the Christian faith,” and threatening that the Jews run the risk of losing “what had been permitted them till now unless they abstain from those matters which are forbidden.” Justinian revalidated that disposition.¹²⁹ Theodosius II prohibited in 425 public entertainments on the principal Christian holidays, specifying that this prohibition applied also to Jews and pagans.¹³⁰

IV. PROTECTION

Several cycles of attacks on Jewish communities and destruction of synagogues by Christian mobs motivated legislation to protect the Jews. Seven such laws were enacted between 393 and 423: by Theodosius I (393),¹³¹ Arcadius (397),¹³² Honorius with Theodosius II (412,¹³³ 420,¹³⁴ and three laws in 423¹³⁵). Similar to their pagan predecessors these emperors construed from their commitment to the rule of law their duty to protect the Empire’s Jewish subjects, but unlike them, they were occasionally inhibited by Christian public opinion. The Roman antithesis of law versus lawlessness did not easily fit in a context that was perceived, from a Christian perspective, in the paradoxical terms of criminal victims and innocent criminals. The champions of the law

¹²⁶ *CJ.* 1:9:2 (*JRIL* no. 57, pp. 367–8). The dating to the fourth century rests on stylistic grounds.

¹²⁷ *CJ.* 1:9:2 (*JRIL* no. 57, pp. 367–8).

¹²⁸ *CJ.* 1:9:13 (*JRIL* no. 40, pp. 266–7).

¹²⁹ “in contemptum Christianae fidei . . . amissuri sine dubio permissa hactenus, nisi ab illicitis temptaverint” (*CTH.* 16:8:18 = *CJ.* 1:9:11, *JRIL* no. 36, pp. 236–8).

¹³⁰ *CTH.* 15:5:5 (*JRIL* no. 50, pp. 301–4).

¹³¹ *CTH.* 16:8:9 (*JRIL* no. 21, pp. 189–191).

¹³² *CTH.* 16:8:12 (*JRIL* no. 25, pp. 197–8).

¹³³ *CTH.* 16:8:20 (*JRIL* no. 40, pp. 262–7).

¹³⁴ *CTH.* 16:8:21 = *CJ.* 1:9:14 (*JRIL* no. 46, pp. 283–6).

¹³⁵ *CTH.* 16:8:25 (*JRIL* no. 47, pp. 287–9); *CTH.* 16:8:26 (*JRIL* no. 48, pp. 289–95); *CTH.* 16:10:24 = *CJ.* 1:11:6 (*JRIL* no. 49, pp. 295–301).

were forced to choose between their formal legal duty to the victims and their religious solidarity with their persecutors; they chose, on the whole, law and order.

Theodosius I faced this dilemma when the synagogue in Callinicum was looted and destroyed by Christian fanatics in 388: he duly punished the rioters and took steps to have the victims indemnified, but was subsequently forced by Ambrose to retract and to publicly acknowledge that his duty as a devout Christian, let alone a devout Christian emperor, lay in the opposite direction. That emblematic confrontation between emperor and bishop typified the conflict between two contradictory ideological positions in regard to Jewry-law protection. Although Ambrose acknowledged that the emperor's policy was grounded on the Roman law-and-order tradition,¹³⁶ he challenged it on three counts. He posited, first, the superiority of religious piety over secular law: "which is superior, apparent law and order or the cause of religion?"¹³⁷ and distinguished, furthermore, between the law's authentic objective and its mere form. He maintained, finally, that the Jews were not entitled to the law's protection: in principle, as members of the sinful, criminal Synagogue (playing deftly on the ambivalence of the term Synagogue/synagogue) and because of their alienation from the Roman Law, and, in particular, on account of their own unlawful rioting against Christians. To quote from his letter to Theodosius I: "And while they themselves refuse to be bound by the Roman Laws and consider these laws to be nothing better than crimes, now they demand to be avenged by the Roman laws. Where were these laws when they put on fire the principal sacred churches? If Julian did not avenge the church because he was a traitor, will you, Emperor, avenge the damaged synagogue because you are Christian?"¹³⁸ Subsequent Jewry-law protection evolved as an ongoing dialogue with these objections.

¹³⁶ "sed disciplinae te ratio, imperator, movet." (M. Zelzer [ed.], *Sancti Ambrosii opera, Epistula et Acta*, t. III [CSEL 82], 1990, no. 1a [40], p. 167).

¹³⁷ "Quid igitur est amplius, disciplinae species an causa religionis? Cedat oportet censura devotioni." (ibid.).

¹³⁸ "Et cum ipsi Romanis legibus teneri se negent ita ut crimina leges putent, nunc velut Romanis legibus se vindicandos putant. Ubi erant istae leges cum incenderent ipsi sacratarum basilicarum culmina? Si Iulianus non est ultus ecclesiam quia prevaricator erat, tu, imperator, ulciscens synagogae iniuriam quia Christianus es?" (Op. cit., p. 172).

These emperors flatly rejected the argument that the Jews were not entitled to the protection of the law. Theodosius inferred the legal status of their “sect” from the negative proposition that it was not prohibited by any law,¹³⁹ while Theodosius II addressed the claim that the Jews are by essence criminals, hence legitimate prey, only to infer that for that very reason the rule of law and public justice were instituted—that no one should take the law into his hands even against manifest criminals.¹⁴⁰ The argument that the Christian religion and state law were contradictory in this particular context was, understandably, treated with some circumspection. Elegant understatements¹⁴¹ and rhetorical tropes were employed in order to extenuate the Christian identity of the rioters or to deny it altogether,¹⁴² and by accusing them of abusing “the authority of [the Christian] religion” as a “cover” for their crimes,¹⁴³ the legislator clearly dissociated them from the Christian faith. Some face-saving sop was thrown, nonetheless, to the hard-liners (possibly also in reference to accusations that the Jews themselves were guilty of similar riots against churches) in stern warnings to the Jews, “lest the Jews grow perchance insolent, and elated by their security commit something rash against the reverence of the Christian cult.”¹⁴⁴

Justinian adopted, in his *Code*, two of the more resolutely protective laws transmitted in the *Theodosian Code*,¹⁴⁵ though he mitigated the compensation imposed for illegal seizure of property from thrice and fourfold of the value of the property seized to only twice.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ “Iudaeorum sectam nulla lege prohibitam satis constat” (*CTh.* 16:8:9).

¹⁴⁰ “etiam si sit aliquis sceleribus implicatus, idcirco tamen iudiciorum vigor iurisque publici tutela videtur in medio constituta, ne quisquam sibi ipse permittere valeat ultionem.” (*CTh.* 16:8:21 = *CJ.* 1:9:14).

¹⁴¹ “nimietatem” (*CTh.* 16:8:9), “inconsulte” (*CTh.* 16:8:26).

¹⁴² “[Christiani] qui vel vere sunt vel esse dicuntur” (*CTh.* 16:10:24 = *CJ.* 1:11:6).

¹⁴³ “sub Christianae religionis nomine inlicita quaeque praesumunt” (*CTh.* 16:8:9), “sub praetextu venerandae Christianitatis” (*CTh.* 16:8:26), “religionis auctoritate abusi” (*CTh.* 16:10:24 = *CJ.* 1:11:6).

¹⁴⁴ *CTh.* 16:8:21 = *CJ.* 1:9:14. See also *CTh.* 16:8:26.

¹⁴⁵ *CJ.* 1:9:14 (*JRIL* no. 46, p. 285) and *CJ.* 1:11:6 (*JRIL* no. 49, p. 300).

¹⁴⁶ See *CJ.* 1:11:6.

V. SECULAR JEWRY-LAW IN THE MIDDLE AND LATE BYZANTINE PERIODS

A. *General Characteristics*

The legally authorized existence of the Jews in the Byzantine Empire continued to be sustained through the 1204 debacle by the traditional three-tiered system, although on several occasions it was formally proscribed and the Jewry-law that guaranteed it temporarily dismantled. The essentially conservative function of Jewry-law was strikingly defined by Leo VI toward the end of the ninth century: "Our predecessors on the throne have promulgated different laws concerning the nation of the Hebrews... These laws, which deal with the organization of their life, order that they read the Divine Scriptures, that they should not be hindered from their proper customs, even that their children should be recognized as their own by blood relationship as well as by kinship of circumcision." Basil I, he adds, converted them to Christianity, "but... he still did not legislate in a law that the former laws, which granted freedom to live in the Jewish way, were null and void. We have deemed it reasonable, therefore, to complete what our father let by; and we impose silence on any ancient law forming legal rules about the Hebrews, and decree that they shall not dare live their life in a way different from what the pure and saving faith of the Christians would wish."¹⁴⁷ This abrogation proved to be a brief episode, but Leo's view of the essential linkage between Jewry-law and the continuance of Judaism is highly revealing.

Jewry-law during that period consisted of two components, distinct yet symbiotically active: imperial law, directly applicable to the Jews, and canon law, bearing on a range of religious subjects, directly

¹⁴⁷ "Οι εμπροσθεν εις τα σκηπτρα κατασταντες περι του... των Εβραιων γενους, ... εν συμφοραις διαφορους εξεθεντο νομους οι περι καταστασεως της εκεινων ζωης διαλαμβανοντες κελευουσι ταις θειαις γραφαις εντυγχανειν αυτους και των οικειων εθιμων μη ειργεσθαι, αλλα και τους παιδας προς τη συγγενεια του αιματος και τω εκ της περιτομης συγγενει προσοικειουσθαι αυτους, ... ουκετι και νομου ψηφισματι τοις προτεροις νομοις οι παρειχον αδειαν Ιουδαιικως ζην και την αφωνιαν και αργιαν εθεσπισεν. Ημεις ουν οπερ ο ημετερος παρηκε πατηρ ευλογον κριναντες αναπληρωσαι παντι νομω αρχαιοτερω τω περι Εβραιων νομοθετουντι σιγαν επιτρεπομεν, και μη αλλως αυτους τολμαν πολιτευεσθαι η ως, η καθαρα και σωτεριος των Χριστιανων πιστις βουλεται." (*Novel 55*, P. Noailles and A. Dain, *Les Nouvelles de Léon VI le Sage*, Paris 1944; *JLSM* no. [320], pp. 149-51).

applicable to the faithful and only obliquely—through its action on the Christians—to the Jews. Imperial Jewry-law was highly conservative, with very few major innovations to show by the close of this long period, while canon law contribution was fairly modest in quantity, certainly in comparison with the parallel evolution in the West and due, possibly, to the clear predominance of the imperial Jewry-law and to the special position of the Byzantine Church as an Established Church within the framework of the Empire. Canonists looking for authoritative legal material to augment canonical legislation could—and frequently did—find it in the imperial law, and the outcome—the typically Byzantine *Nomocanon* legal tradition—exerted considerable influence on the evolution and application of Byzantine Jewry-law in general.

B. *Private Systematization*

The first phase in the post-Justinianic history of the imperial Jewry-law covered the second half of the sixth century. It consisted of two major projects, both accomplished by private jurists: the complete translation of the Justinianic corpus into Greek, and the systematic integration into that corpus of Justinian's *Novels*, including the five *Novels* bearing on Jewry-law topics promulgated between 535 and 553: nos. 37, 45, 131, 139, and 146.¹⁴⁸ Posterior to the *Codex repetitae praelectionis* of 534, they were available to the legal practitioner only as full texts and in unwieldy and unsystematic collections such as the *Collection of 168 Novels* and the Latin *Authenticum*, loosely-connected appendages to the *Code*: hence the need for their translation, summarization, and systematic integration into the Justinianic corpus.

These five *Novels* were summarized between 572 and 602 by Theodoros Scholasticus Hermopolitanus in his popular reference-work *Epitome of Justinian's Novels*. They were broken down into separate legal rulings, seventeen in all,¹⁴⁹ integrated into Justinian's corpus by means of cross-references to parallel texts in the *Code* and to other *Novels*, and provided, occasionally, with short comments. Heavy editing—practically a rewriting—turned these texts into practicable precepts for action, at the price, occasionally, of some content alteration, even outright errors. In translating from Latin into Greek and

¹⁴⁸ *JRIL* nos. 62–66.

¹⁴⁹ K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *Anecdota*, Leipzig 1843.

editing *Novel* no. 139, for example, Theodoros replaced the law's sweeping exclusion of the rebaptized from any public office (*militia*) with a limited exclusion from the military service (στρατεία) only,¹⁵⁰ exchanged the pejorative designation of the "caves" of the Jews, the pagans and the heretics with the value-free definition "a house or a place for prayer,"¹⁵¹ rephrased the disposition in regard to the asylum right of all the churches in the Province of Africa so as to apply to the church of Carthage alone,¹⁵² and rendered "violators of the Christian Faith" as "one who shall commit violence against a Christian."¹⁵³ These alterations might be ascribed to faulty translation, yet the following howler occurs in the edited Greek text of *Novel* no. 139: "those from the village of Syndus" were wrongly identified as "the Sidonians."¹⁵⁴ A clearer, comprehensive wording was achieved, on the other hand, in *Novel* 146, when "in their synagogues and, in general, in any place where there are Jews" was replaced by "in the synagogues and in other places or assemblies."¹⁵⁵

While Theodoros dealt with each *Novel* separately, Athanasios of Emesa followed a different method of systematization in his *Epitome of the Novels*. In this popular work, designed as an introduction to the *Novels* and known today through its second edition (from 572/577), the separate rulings—with cross-references to other *Novels* put in accompanying *paratitla*—were arranged in twenty-two titles according to five thematic categories. Its twenty Jewry-law texts¹⁵⁶ are scattered

¹⁵⁰ "Rebaptizatos autem militiam quidem habere nullo modo concedimus" (*JRIL* no. 62, p. 383)—"Ο αναβαπτισθεις στρατειας μονης κωλυετω" (*JLSM*, no. [7], p. 28). The obviously limited sense of στρατεία in this context excludes the possibility that it refers to public-office employment in general.

¹⁵¹ "Neque enim Iudaeos neque paganos neque Donatistas neque Arianos neque alios quoscumque haereticos...speluncas habere." (*JRIL* no. 62, p. 384)—"Μη εχετω οιαδηποτε αιρησις οικον η τοπον προσευχης" (*JLSM* no. [9], p. 29).

¹⁵² "Confugas etiam...qui ad venerabiles ecclesias et earum fines convolare festinant...nulli penitus licere...ab his abstrahere, sed eos venerabilibus locis debita reverentia perpotiri." (*JRIL* no. 62, p. 384.)—"Ο καταφευγων επι την εκκλησιαν Καρταγενης ." (*JLSM* no. [11], p. 29).

¹⁵³ "Christianae fidei violatores" (*JRIL* no. 62, p. 384.)—"βιαν Χριστιανω ποιησει" (*JLSM* no. [11], p. 29).

¹⁵⁴ "τους απο Σινδουος της κωμης" (*JRIL* no. 63, p. 390)—"τοις Σιδωνιοις" (*JLSM* no. [16], p. 31). He should have noticed the specific designation of that place as "village."

¹⁵⁵ "κατα τας συναγωγας τας αυτων καθ' ον Εβραιοι ολωσ τοπον εισι." (*JRIL* no. 66, p. 405)—"εν ταις συναγωγαίς και εν αλλοις τοποις η συνοδοις" (*JLSM* no. [17], p. 32).

¹⁵⁶ D. Simon and S. Troianos, *Das Novellensyntagma des Athanasios von Emesa*, (Frankfurt am Main, 1989).

through five of its titles (nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 8) and their *paratitla*. One of these rulings was received into a later epitome of Athanasios's work, compiled by an anonymous author prior to the eleventh century.¹⁵⁷

The first complete systematization of Justinian's Jewry-law in Greek was achieved in the *Collectio Tripartita*, a Civil-law supplement to the *Collection of Canons in XIV Titles*. Forty-two Jewry-law texts received from the *Code* in Anatolius's Greek translation are included in its first book, three texts received from the *Digest* in the *Anonymous's* translation are comprised in its second, and fourteen texts received from Athanasios's *Epitome of the Novels* are found in its third. These are concise legal rulings, stripped of any rhetorical ornamentation or reference to the historical circumstances that determined their promulgation in the first place. Similar to the previously discussed works, the three hermeneutical characteristics of the *Collectio Tripartita*—translating the Latin texts into Greek, distilling concise rulings of action from the original full texts, and the systematic grafting of texts into a comprehensive legal corpus—amounted, in fact, to a remarkable conservation of Justinian's Jewry-law, and at the same time to its ongoing transformation, in both letter and spirit.

The usually correct translations replaced the old Latin texts with new—yet essentially identical—Greek texts. This is particularly evident in cases where Justinian's codification transformed its Theodosian source, e.g. when Justinian reserved all legal cases involving Jews to the regular judiciary: the Greek text of the *Collectio* faithfully follows the *Code's* spirit, though not its letter.¹⁵⁸ Some of the textual changes were quite trivial, due to authorial inadvertence or to the usual hazards of text-transmission. Such was the erroneous reduction of the fine for contravening the laws on the exclusion of Jews from public-office from thirty to twenty pounds of gold,¹⁵⁹ correctly quoted, however, in another paraphrase of that same law.¹⁶⁰ The *Collectio's* dependence on Athanasios's translation of the *Novels* induced it to adopt his probably erroneous version of the ruling on church asylum, excluding

¹⁵⁷ D. Simon and S. Troianos, *Fontes minores*, Vol. 3, (Frankfurt am Main, 1979).

¹⁵⁸ "tam ad superstitionem eorum quam ad forum et leges ac iura" (*CJ.* 1:9:8, *JRIL* no. 28, p. 209)—περι τε φορου και θρησκευιας και του νομου." (*JLSM* no. [62], p. 47). See above for Justinian's editorial sleight-of-hand on the Theodosian text.

¹⁵⁹ *JLSM* no. [46], p. 42.

¹⁶⁰ *JLSM* no. [73], p. 50.

from such asylum “those who oppressed Christians violently.”¹⁶¹ But other textual changes derived, undoubtedly, from choice and design. In the matter of the legal status of the Jewish community, Caracalla’s enigmatic rescript on the legacy left by Cornelia Salvia to the Jewish community in Antioch was stripped of all historical identification marks and transformed into the general laconic ruling that “what is left in legacy to the crowd of the Jews cannot be claimed.”¹⁶² The term used to denote the community (ομαδος), with its shrill undertones of unruly mob, sounds quite differently from Justinian’s reference to the legally established “universitati Iudaeorum qui in Antiochensium civitate constituti sunt” (“the commonality of the Jews who are established in the city of the Antiocheans”)¹⁶³ but conforms well to the denial in principle of the Jewish community that seems to inform this particular disqualification. Another transformation was operated on Justinian’s prohibition of mixed marriages. The original permission that not only relatives but the public in general could prefer charges in this matter—processed according to the rules of trials on adultery—becomes in the *Collectio* a mandatory public accusation,¹⁶⁴ its very publicity an indication of gravity and, possibly, a powerful means of dissuasion. Textual changes were introduced, furthermore, in order to clarify vague passages. The broad threat to divest the Jews from “what had been permitted them till now” in retribution for their sacrilegious mockery of the Christian faith relates in the *Collectio* specifically to “the [concessions] on religion they have been previously granted.”¹⁶⁵

The author departs from his usual method of deriving legal rulings directly from the legislative text when he enunciates a ruling arrived through legal debate. The question whether the Jews should be categorized as heretics—and liable, therefore, to share with the other heretics their legal disabilities—became increasingly apposite with the growing

¹⁶¹ “τους Χριστιανους εβιασατο.” (*JLSM* no. [95], p. 56). This is identical to Athanasios’s version (op. cit. no. [30], p. 35), a slight improvement on Theodoros (op. cit. no. [11], p. 29) and quite different from the Latin version of that *Novel* (*JRIL* no. 62, p. 384). See above.

¹⁶² “Το τη ομαδι των Ιουδαιων ληγατευομενον ουκ απαιτειται.” (*JLSM* no. [55], p. 46).

¹⁶³ *CJ*. 1:9:1 (*JRIL* no. 3, p. 108).

¹⁶⁴ “libertate in accusandum publicis quoque vocibus relaxata.” (*CJ*. 1:9:6, *JRIL* no. 18, p. 180)—“πουβλικως επι μοιχεια κατηγορουνται” (*JLSM* no. [60], p. 46). Note the Grecized retention of the Latin term *publicis*.

¹⁶⁵ “permissa hactenus” (*CJ*. 1:9:11, *JRIL* 36, p. 238)—“της επιτετραμμενης αυτοις θρησκειας” (*JLSM* no. [65] p. 48).

number of laws that coupled together Jews and heretics since the early fifth century, and, furthermore, subjected them to similar or identical measures. The author affirms, in reference to *CJ*. 1:5:21 and in the style typical to the legal commentator: “Note that the Jew is not designated by the term heretic... the law... did not wish... to include them [i.e. the Jews] within the term of heretic.” The contrary opinion was also propounded in that debate, for the author concludes: “Note, because [this] has been much discussed.”¹⁶⁶

A renewed interest in the *Novels* as a relevant body of law inspired the production of the *Synopsis of the Novels of Justinian* about the end of the ninth century or the beginning of the tenth¹⁶⁷ and the *Concise Survey of Justinian’s Novels*, attributed to Michael Psellus in the eleventh century.¹⁶⁸ The Jewry-law texts in the first work were processed according to the sixth-century models, dealing with each *Novel* separately in the manner of Theodoros, and some texts were indeed borrowed from his epitome.¹⁶⁹ The other work records the effective abrogation of *Novel* 139 on the punishments for illicit marriages contracted by Jews, omitted from the *Basilica*,¹⁷⁰ and of *Novel* 37 on the churches in Africa, among the “*Novels* which were inserted into the *Basilica* but became obsolete because they were not applied.”¹⁷¹

The *Ropai*, a practical handbook based on Justinian’s corpus that originated as early as the period of the *Antecessors* and was subsequently revised several times, was a compilation of texts bearing on time limits in judicial—mainly procedural—contexts.¹⁷² It carried two Jewry-law texts: one determining the Jews’ exemption from all corporal *liturgies* or *angareias* (αγγαρειας) on their rest-days and holidays, the other fixing at five years the time-limit within which a *post-mortem*

¹⁶⁶ “Σημειωσαι οτι τη του αιρετικου προσηγορια ο Ιουδαιος ου περιεχεται...η διαταξις...ου βουλεται αυτους τη των αιρητικων προσηγορια συμπεριλαμβανεσθαι. Σημειωσαι ως και πανυ ζητουμενον.” (*JLSM* no. [74], pp. 50–51).

¹⁶⁷ A. Schmink and D. Simon, “Eine Synopsis der Novellen Justinians” *Fontes minores*, Vol. 4, (Frankfurt am Main, 1981).

¹⁶⁸ A. Berger, *Pselli de Iustiniani Novellis Libellum*, (Leipzig, 1836).

¹⁶⁹ E.g. the rulings derived from *Novel* 37 (*JLSM* nos. [8], [12] = no. [323]).

¹⁷⁰ Theodoros qualified it already as a “local law” (διαταξις τοπικη) (*JLSM* no. [16], p. 31).

¹⁷¹ “Αι δε τεθεισαι μεν εν τοις βασιλικοις υπο δε αχρηστιας σχολασασαι εισιν αυται.” (*JLSM* no. [352], p. 174).

¹⁷² K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *Ai Ropai, oder die Schrift über die Zeitabschnitte, welche insgemein einem Evstathios, Antecessor zu Konstantinopel, zugeschrieben wird*, (Heidelberg, 1836), repr. by Zepos, *IGR*, Vol. 3, Athens, 1931.

accusation for apostasy could be preferred against a Christian who apostatized to either Judaism or paganism.¹⁷³

C. Imperial Codification

i. From the *Ecloga* to the Prochiron

While private initiative characterized the first phase in the post-Justinianic history of the Byzantine Jewry-law, the following phase, covering the eighth and the ninth centuries, witnessed the return of the state, the resumption by the imperial authorities of their normal role in determining and enforcing the general policy on the Jews. The *Ecloga*, a selection of rulings of private and criminal law from Justinian's corpus, was promulgated by Leo III in 726. Unlike previous Roman codification, however, it did not comprise any Jewry-law text, a puzzling omission that is probably to be explained by the fact that both the compilation and the promulgation of the *Ecloga* practically coincided with the enforced conversion of the Jews that Leo III decreed in 721/2. Suppressing Jewry-law simultaneously with forcibly converting the Jews made perfectly good sense, for the cassation of the legal existence of the Jews in the Empire implied, necessarily, the abrogation of the legal means by which it was traditionally sustained. Leo VI recognized this truism towards the end of the ninth century.

The forced conversion campaign was eventually abandoned, either through a decree or by allowing it to peter out, and the Empire returned to the old *status quo*—with its traditional Jewry-law, or at least parts of it. Eight such legal texts bearing on Jewish-Christian relations—particularly in regard to Christian slaves owned by Jews—were thus added to the *Ecloga* in two *Appendices*,¹⁷⁴ three texts in *Appendix III* and five in *Appendix VIII*. These supplements were made as early as the eighth or during the ninth century, at any rate prior to the promulgation of the *Basilica*, for they were all received from the *Collectio Tripartita*.¹⁷⁵ The great popularity of the augmented *Ecloga* guaranteed to these texts diffusion and long duration among Byzantine populations even beyond the Empire's borders: the three texts of *Appendix III* were

¹⁷³ 3:8 = *CJ*. 1:9:13 and 28:18 = *CJ*. 1:7:2.

¹⁷⁴ L. Burgmann and S. Troianos, "Appendix Eclogae," *Fontes minores*, Vol. 3, (Frankfurt am Main, 1979).

¹⁷⁵ *Appendix III*, nos. 5, 12, 18 (*JLSM* nos. [294], [295], [296] = *Coll. Trip.* nos. [73], [51], [53]); *Appendix VIII*, nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 (*JLSM* nos. [78], [79], [80], [81], [84]).

included in the Arabic *Ecloga*,¹⁷⁶ produced as late as the beginning of the thirteenth-century, and they reappeared—together with two of the five texts of *Appendix VIII*—in Version III of the *Ecloga ad Prochiron mutata*,¹⁷⁷ privately compiled in Norman southern Italy in the eleventh-twelfth centuries and extant in four distinct versions.

The *Prochiron*, the first publication in Basil's grand project of the *Purification of the Laws*, was promulgated between 870 and 879. A handbook designed for the use of judges in their day-to-day practice, it comprised texts on matters considered most likely to come before the court.¹⁷⁸ Two Jewry-law texts were thus selected from the *Collectio Tripartita*, bearing on the topic of apostasy/proselytism and Christian slaves owned by Jews.¹⁷⁹ The next handbook to appear in this series was the *Eisagoge (Epanagoge)*.¹⁸⁰ Completed circa 885 or 886, it received from the *Prochiron* the two texts noted above and added a third text—borrowed from the *Collectio Tripartita*—on the political incapacity of the Jews.¹⁸¹

At least three private compilations transmitted Jewry-law texts received from these official sources. The *Epitome of the Laws*, compiled during the reign of Leo VI (886–912),¹⁸² carries six such texts, five of which deal with proselytizing in general and with owning and proselytizing Christian slaves in particular, while the sixth concerns the *Heaven-Worshippers*. Two of these laws were received from the *Prochiron*,¹⁸³ and the other four are based on texts received from the third and the eighth *Appendices* to the *Ecloga* and from the *Collec-*

¹⁷⁶ S. Leder, *Die arabische Ecloga: das vierte Buch der Kanones der Könige aus der Sammlung des Makarios (Fontes minores Vol. 12)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985); 24:3, 9, 15 (*JLSM* nos. [309], [310], [311]) = *App.* III 5, 12, 18 (*JLSM* nos. [294], [295], [296]).

¹⁷⁷ K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *IGR* Vol. 4, (Leipzig, 1865); 36:2, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17 (*JLSM* nos. [302], [303], [304], [306], [307], [308]) = *App.* III nos. 18, 12, 5; *App.* VIII nos. 2, 3 (*JLSM* nos. [294], [295], [296], [298], [301]).

¹⁷⁸ K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *O Proceiros Nomos, Imperatorum Basilii, Constantini et Leonis Prochiron*, (Heidelberg, 1837).

¹⁷⁹ 39:31, 32 (*JLSM* nos. [327], [328]) = *Coll. Trip.* 1:10:1–2 and 1:7:P:1:9:18 (*JLSM* nos. [78]–[79], [53]).

¹⁸⁰ K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *Collectio librorum juris Graeco-Romani ineditorum*, (Leipzig, 1852).

¹⁸¹ 9:13; 40:33, 34 (*JLSM* nos. [312]–[314]) = *Coll. Trip.* 1:5:12; 1:10:1–2; 1:7:P:1:9:18 (*JLSM* nos. [46], [78]–[79], [53]).

¹⁸² K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *IGR* Vol. 7, (Leipzig, 1884).

¹⁸³ 45:77, 78 (*JLSM* nos. [333]–[334], p. 157) = *Prochiron* 39:31, 32 (*JLSM* nos. [327], [328], p. 155).

tio Tripartita.¹⁸⁴ Of particular interest in the context of the debate on whether the Jews should be treated as heretics is the definition of heresy proposed in the *Epitome*. While the original text on the *Heaven-Worshippers* ends with the definition “For that which differs from the Christian faith is against it,”¹⁸⁵ the *Epitome* goes even further: “Note that a heretic is one who deviates even in the smallest matter from the Orthodox faith.”¹⁸⁶ The second private work of this type, the *Prochiron of the Laws*, was compiled toward the end of the tenth century among the Byzantine population of southern Italy and revised in the middle of the twelfth.¹⁸⁷ It comprises five Jewry-law texts, dealing mostly with proselytizing and especially with the owning and circumcising of Christian slaves, but also with the Jews’ political incapacity. Four of these texts were received from the *Epitome of the Laws*¹⁸⁸ and one from the *Prochiron*.¹⁸⁹ The *Eisagoge* provided the core texts to the third work of this type, the *Eisagoge Aucta*, compiled in the second half of the tenth century.¹⁹⁰ The three original Jewry-law texts of the *Eisagoge*, dealing with the political incapacity of the Jews and with proselytizing in general and that of Christian slaves in particular, were supplemented in that work by two more texts on the same subjects, received from *Appendix III* to the *Ecloga*.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁴ 45:43 (*JLSM* no. [329], p. 156) = *Eclogae App. VIII*, 3 (*JLSM* no. [299], p. 141), adding the death penalty for circumcising a Christian slave; 45:44 (*JLSM* no. [330], p. 156) = *Eclogae App. VIII*, 2 (*JLSM* no. [298], p. 141); 45:62 (*JLSM* no. [331], p. 156) = *Eclogae App. III*, 18 (*JLSM* no. [296], p. 140); 45:63 (*JLSM* no. [332], p. 156) = *Coll. trip.* 1:9:12 (*JLSM* no. [66], p. 48).

¹⁸⁵ “Το γὰρ ἀπαδὸν τῆς Χριστιανικῆς πίστεως ἐναντίον ἐστὶν” (*JLSM* no. [332], p. 156).

¹⁸⁶ “Σημειῶσαι. Αἰρετικὸς ἐστὶν καὶ ὁ μικρὸν ἐκκλινὼν τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως” (*ibid.*).

¹⁸⁷ F. Brandileone and V. Puntoni, *Prochiron Legum publicato secondo il codice Vaticano Greco 845*, (Rome, 1895).

¹⁸⁸ 40:27 (*JLSM* no. [336], pp. 157–158) = *Epitome* 45:43 (*JLSM* no. [329], p. 156); 40:28 (*JLSM* no. [337], p. 158) = *Epitome* 45:44 (*JLSM* no. [330], p. 156); 40:29 (*JLSM* no. [338], p. 158) = *Epitome* 45:54; 40:32 (*JLSM* no. [339], p. 158) based loosely on *Epitome* 45:62 (*JLSM* no. [331], p. 156).

¹⁸⁹ 34:30 (*JLSM* no. [335], p. 157) = *Prochiron*, 39:31 (*JLSM* no. [327], p. 155), with some changes.

¹⁹⁰ K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *IGR* Vol. 4, (Leipzig, 1865).

¹⁹¹ 52:24, 27, 28 and 53:7, 13 (*JLSM* nos. [315]–[319]) = *Eisagoge* 9:13; 40:33, 34 (*JLSM* nos. [312]–[314]) and *Eclogae App. III* 5, 12 (*JLSM* nos. [294], [295]).

ii. *The Basilica*

With the *Basilica*, the *Purification of the Laws* attained its highest achievement, and after the rather dim interlude of the eighth century Jewry-law was restored to its Justinianic stature. The new code was completed probably a short time before the death of Basil I in 886 (Recension A),¹⁹² reworked under Leo VI (886–912) into Recension B,¹⁹³ and reedited around the middle of the eleventh century into Recension C,¹⁹⁴ the most popular of the three. Following the Justinianic model, almost all the Jewry-law texts are concentrated in a single title in the *Basilica*'s first book which deals with religious topics, but some texts are scattered among other books as well, mainly in Book 60. All the texts are in Greek: the texts from the *Justinian Code* were received from Thalelaios's *Commentary to the Codex*, and the *Novels* from the works of Theodoros and Athanasios.

From a purely quantitative perspective, the *Basilica* represents an impressive return to the Justinianic Jewry-law: 27 texts in Recension A, 24 in B, and 24 in C, received from a common fund of 24 texts (19 from the *Code*, 2 from the *Digest*, and 3 *Novels*), as against 35 texts in the entire Justinianic Corpus (28 in the *Code*, 3 from the *Digest*, and 4 *Novels*). The editors of the *Basilica* adopted a considerable number of their *Code* texts (12 out of 18) directly from its main Jewry-law title (1:9, *De Iudaeis et Caelicolis*), more or less in their original sequence. They rejected 9 Justinianic texts: 7 from the *Code*, and one each from the *Digest* and the *Novels*.

In revalidating more than two-thirds of the Justinianic texts the *Basilica* reestablished, in fact, Justinian's Jewry-law, the legally articulated official policy in the five categories of jurisdiction, self-government, state and municipal government, religion (comprising Christian-Jewish relations, synagogues and holidays), and protection. The nine texts that the editors of the *Basilica* rejected do not add up to a homogeneous group, or to any single one of these five categories. Two of these texts (*CJ.* 1:5:13; 1:9:2) are not absolutely identifiable as components of the Justinian *Code*: they could have been missing from the *Code* exemplars utilized in the making of the *Basilica*. The other

¹⁹² G. E. and C. G. E. Heimbach, *Basilicorum libri LX*, (Leipzig, 1833–1870).

¹⁹³ C. A. Fabrotus, *Basilicorum libri LX*, (Paris, 1647).

¹⁹⁴ H. J. Scheltema and N. van der Wal, *Basilicorum libri LX*, Ser. A, I–VIII, (Groningen, 1955–1988).

laws were presumably suppressed because of their originally local or temporary applicability, their irrelevance to contemporary conditions, or because they dealt with matters already covered elsewhere in the *Basilica*. *Novel* 139 on the punishments for illicit marriages contracted by Jews, specifically designated as a “local law” by Theodoros, was certainly omitted on these grounds. Irrelevance was probably the reason why the *Basilica* omitted the text on the legacy left by Cornelia Salvia to the Jews in Antioch (*CJ.* 1:9:1), the repeal of the exemption from curial duties to Jewish “men of religion” (*CJ.* 1:9:5), the insipid statement that all those who owe curial service should be compelled to undertake it (*CJ.* 1:9:10), the interdiction on mocking Christianity on *Purim* (*CJ.* 1:9:11) and the provisions made for collecting the *Aurum Coronarium* in the two Provinces of Palestine and in other provinces after the cessation of the *Patriarchate* (*CJ.* 1:9:17). Redundancy probably caused the omission of *Dig.* 50.2.3.3 on the exemption from those *liturgies* that transgress the Jewish religion, already covered by *Dig.* 27:1:15:6 and present in all three recensions of the *Basilica*.

The permanence of that Jewry-law in the three recensions of the *Basilica* through almost two centuries is a striking testimony to its durability. It did not undergo significant structural changes during this period: all three recensions concentrated the greater part of these texts in one title—1:1—and located the remainder mainly in Book 60. They exhibit some discrepancy in their sequences of texts, but it is of no great importance. Permanence did not imply, however, stability, certainly not in the long run, for the continuous consultation of these texts in court and among jurists was bound to affect their content. The interval between the promulgation of Recension A and that of B was too short for such a transformation, and their Jewry-law texts are, in fact, almost identical. It is quite possible that even the few divergences signaled between A and B should be attributed to faulty manuscript transmission rather than to authentic variation between their original texts. A considerably lengthier juridical usage resulted, however, in the notable transformation exhibited by Recension C. Its Jewry-law consists of two distinct groups: the larger of the two, comprising 18 texts, was inserted in the specifically ‘religious’ title 1:1, and a smaller group of nine texts—two *Digest* and seven *Code* texts, a sort of remainder to the first set—is scattered among three other books, mainly in Book 60 (seven of the nine). All the texts in the first group were heavily edited, practically transformed, while the second group preserved the texts in

their A and B versions, indicating, perhaps, that the Jewry-law component of Recension C was realized by at least two teams of editors.¹⁹⁵

The first group of texts was meticulously rewritten as concise, practical rulings, in an editing process similar to that employed by the sixth-century epitomizers. This entailed the elimination of all ‘redundant’ rhetorical finery (foregoing the subtle—and not so subtle—manipulation of judges through the artfully phrased law as well as the propaganda value of the publicly diffused text), all historical information bearing on the particular circumstances of the legislative acts (typical in rescript-legislation), detailed inventories of potentialities and varieties of law-breaking, and all general statements of legal, religious, and ethical principles of the type “for it is right and just to... it is pious to... one must distinguish between the secular and the religious... between the faithful and the godless.”

This radical editing resulted in a real transformation of the Jewry-law by purging declarations of principles favorable to the Jews, in the first place. Such were the affirmation that the synagogues are “edifices of religion,”¹⁹⁶ the argument that non-Jews should not be appointed controllers of prices to merchandise of Jews because “it is just to assign to everyone what is his own,”¹⁹⁷ and the outright declaration that no injury should be committed against “an innocent Jew just because he is a Jew.”¹⁹⁸ The editors of C, furthermore, transformed these texts by focusing them on the Jews alone. While B1:1:16 applies equally to Jews, pagans and the “non-baptized,” its edited text in C1:1:11 is directed exclusively at Jews, and, in the same manner, the Jews alone were targeted by C1:1:43 although its source in A1:1:47 and B1:1:43 dealt with them together with the Samaritans. Other changes of substance are due to editorial elucidation of convoluted rhetorical phrasing or of corrupt readings. The awkward phrasing—hence open to several interpretations—in A1:1:43 and B1:1:39 “the other days on which the Jews observe strictly some matters according to their religion” was succinctly clarified in C1:1:39—and the interpretative potentialities

¹⁹⁵ The following C texts are identical to the parallel A and B texts: 21:1:45; 38:1:15; 60:39:7; 60:54:20–21; 60:54:26–29. All the Jewry-law texts in C1:1—with the exception of 1:1:53—are dissimilar to their sources in AB1:1.

¹⁹⁶ “οικιας... θρεσκευων” omitted from C1:1:33.

¹⁹⁷ “δικαιον γαρ εστι τα ιδια εκαστω συγχωρειν” omitted from C1:1:37.

¹⁹⁸ “Ιουδαιος κατα τουτο το ειναι Ιουδαιος μηδεν αμαρτηκως” omitted from C1:1:40.

considerably restricted—with the reading “on their other holidays.”¹⁹⁹ Again, C1:1:38 replaced the corrupt reading in A1:1:42 “the buildings built by them [i.e. by the *Heaven-Worshippers*] as in the form” (this text was not received into Recension B) with the simple “their synagogues,” although the ultimate origin of this text—*CJ.* 1:9:12—reads here only “their edifices.”²⁰⁰ By designating these edifices as “synagogues” the revised text explicitly recognized the *Heaven-Worshippers* as Jews, a straightforward identification that the *Code* tenaciously avoided, professing amazed ignorance as to the true nature of that sect, still maintained by Recensions A and B.²⁰¹

Other changes in content are due to omissions. The status of the Jews with regard to the state judiciary and to the Jewish authorities was largely affected by their status as full Roman citizens or otherwise, by the abstention on the part of the state from implementing its *lāw* on certain types of action defined as essentially “religious” and, consequently, exclusively Jewish, and in its recognition of the role of the Jewish authorities in managing these types of activity. In these three areas one observes a striking transformation through omission. Editing of this type resulted in the complete suppression in C1:1:36 of the Justinianic reference to the various aspects of the jurisdiction to which he subjected the Jews, including religious cases, still detailed in A1:1:40 and B1:1:37: “The Jews, who live under the common Roman law, shall turn to the courts... in all matters that pertain to their superstition as well as to the forum, laws, and justice.”²⁰² The last loophole, recognizing a category of ‘religious cases’ and, possibly, leaving them to the Jewish judiciary, was thus finally closed. Another omission in the same text relates to the explicit reference to the Jews as Roman citizens: Recension C ignores it altogether and deals with them as merely Jews,

¹⁹⁹ “εν ταις λοιπαις ημεραις εν αις οι Ιουδαιοι κατα την αυτων θρησκευειαν τινα παραφυλαττονται” (B1:1:39, *JLSM* no. [198], p. 102; “παραφυλαττοντας” in A1:1:43) = “εν ταις αλλαις αυτων εορταις” (C1:1:39, *JLSM* no. [242], p. 117).

²⁰⁰ “Τα δε παρ’ αυτων οιοκοδομηθεντα ως εν σχηματι” (A1:1:42, *JLSM* no. [197], p. 102) = “τας τουτων... συναγωγας” (C1:1:38, *JLSM* no. [241], p. 117) = “Aedificia autem eorum” (*CJ.* 1:9:12, *JRIL* no. 35, p. 234 and no. 39, p. 259).

²⁰¹ “quae nescio cuius dogmatis novi conventus habent” (*ibid.*). This expression of innocent bewilderment appeared already in the source used by Justinian, from 407 (*ibid.*).

²⁰² “Οι Ιουδαιοι τω Ρωμαικω κοινω νομω βιουντες εν τουτοις τοις πραγμασιν, ατινα προς την θρησκευειαν αυτων και προς την αγοραν και τους νομους και το δικαιον ανηκουσι, προερχεσθωσαν... τοις δικαστηριοις.” (*JLSM* no. [195], p. 101).

regardless of their implied citizenship.²⁰³ One also notes, in the cognate matter of prohibiting the Jewish authorities from judging cases between Jews and Christians, the disappearance of the “*Elders of the Jews*,” still referred to in A1:1:45 and B1:1:41, and their replacement with the indeterminate “Jews” in C1:1:41.²⁰⁴

And the editors of Recension C replaced the “*Ephoros*” in A1:1:41 and B1:1:38 (Controller of prices for the merchandise of the Jews) with “*Exarch*” in C1:1:37,²⁰⁵ presumably in order to substitute a current term for an archaic one. They also corrected the faulty Greek translation of the disposition allowing the public to prefer charges of adultery in cases of mixed marriages. The *Collectio Tripartita* started a process of textual corruption with its reading that such accusations should be made in public, A1:1:38 compounded the error with an upended text: “with the public denied [sic!] the freedom to accuse,” B1:1:35 smelled the rat and omitted that part of the phrase altogether, but C1:1:34 put things right by returning to the Justinianic measure: “and accusation of adultery against suspects shall be open to the public.”²⁰⁶

Comparative Table: The Three Recensions of the Basilica and Corpus Justinianus

RECENSION A	RECENSION B	RECENSION C	CORPUS JUSTINIANUS
1:1:16	1:1:16	1:1:11	<i>CJ.</i> 1:11:6
1:1:30		1:1:26	<i>CJ.</i> 1:5:12
		(abridged; no Jews)	
1:1:34	1:1:31	1:1:30	<i>CJ.</i> 1:5:21
1:1:37	1:1:34	1:1:33	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:4
1:1:38	1:1:35	1:1:34	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:6
1:1:39	1:1:36	1:1:35	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:7

²⁰³ “Κατα τους κοινους νομους Ιουδαιοι πολιτευεσθωσαν.” (*JLSM* no. [239], p. 116).

²⁰⁴ “δοκιμασια των πρεσβυτερων των Ιουδαιων.” (*JLSM* no. [200], p. 103) = “παραιτους Ιουδαιοις,” (*JLSM* no. [244], p. 118).

²⁰⁵ “εφορος” (*JLSM* no. [196], p. 101) = “εξαρχοι” (*JLSM* no. [240] p. 117).

²⁰⁶ “libertate in accusandum publicis quoque vocibus relaxata” (*CJ.* 1:9:6, *JRIL* no. 18, p. 180) = “πουβλικως επι μοιχεια κατηγορουνται” (*JLSM* no. [60], p. 46) = “και ελευτεριας εν τω κατηγορεισθαι ταις δημοσιαις εκβοησεσι στερεισθω” (*JLSM* no. [193] p. 100) = “το περι μοιχειας εντευθεν υφορωμενοι δημοσιον εγκλημα.” (*JLSM* no. [237] p. 116).

Table (cont.)

RECENSION A	RECENSION B	RECENSION C	CORPUS JUSTINIANUS
1:1:40	1:1:37	1:1:36	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:8
1:1:41	1:1:38	1:1:37	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:9
1:1:42		1:1:38	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:12
1:1:43	1:1:39	1:1:39	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:13
1:1:44	1:1:40	1:1:40	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:14
1:1:45	1:1:41	1:1:41	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:15
1:1:46	1:1:42	1:1:42	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:16
1:1:47	1:1:43	1:1:43	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:18
1:1:48	1:1:44	1:1:44	<i>CJ.</i> 1:12:1
1:1:51	1:1:47	1:1:47	<i>Nov. Just.</i> 37
1:1:53	1:1:49,50,51	1:1:49	<i>Nov. Just.</i>
(complete)	no Jews	incomplete (no Jews)	131, c.14
1:1:57	1:1:54	1:1:53 5:3:16	<i>Nov. Just.</i> 146 <i>Nov. Just.</i> 131, c.14
21:1:45	21:1:44	21:1:45	<i>CJ.</i> 1:5:21
38:1:15	38:1:15	38:1:15	<i>Dig.</i> 27:1:15:6
60:39:11	60:39:11	60:39:7	<i>Dig.</i> 48:8:11:pr.
60:54:22	60:54:23	60:54:20	<i>CJ.</i> 1:7:1
60:54:23	60:54:24	60:54:21	<i>CJ.</i> 1:7:2
60:54:28	60:54:29	60:54:26	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:3
60:54:29	60:54:30	60:54:27	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:16
60:54:30	60:54:31	60:54:28	<i>CJ.</i> 1:9:18
60:54:31	60:54:32	60:54:29	<i>CJ.</i> 1:10:1

The prominence of the *Basilica* in Byzantine legal life can be gauged from its adoption into the *Nomocanon* type of codification, on the one hand,²⁰⁷ and from the considerable volume of the ancillary literature—judicial records, epitomes, commentaries, and reference-works—that evolved around it, on the other hand.

Two works composed by high-ranking judges are of particular interest in this regard. The *Peira*, whose full title is *Table of Contents of the book that some call Experience, others call Teaching, based on the*

²⁰⁷ See below.

Acts of the great Eustathios Romaios,²⁰⁸ was written by an assistant of Eustathios, *Drungarios of the Vigla* (chief judge of the Empire), in the early eleventh century. Devoted mainly to Eustathios's legal decisions, it also quotes other sources as well. C21:1:45 is cited as grounds for the decision that heretics and Jews are incapable of testifying against Orthodox defendants, but are capable of giving evidence against each other.²⁰⁹ Another work written by a high-ranking judge was the *Ponema (Poema) Nomikon*, an abridgment of the *Basilica*, written about 1073/4 by Michael Attalioes at the behest of Emperor Michael Dukas.²¹⁰ It contains four Jewry-law precepts, bearing on the topics of mixed marriages²¹¹ and proselytizing.²¹²

The *Scholia*, a body of legal commentaries spanning several centuries (from the tenth to the thirteenth), was gradually attached to the *Basilica*, becoming an integral part of its textual transmission.²¹³ Integrating the *Basilica* texts into the Justinianic corpus, it dealt with the usual Jewry-law topics, such as protection, exemption from *liturgies* that contravene the Jewish religion, circumcision, conversion, and owning Christian slaves. Several *Scholia* to C21:1:45 discuss the legal incapacity of the Jews in the context of the general legal incapacity of the heretics, concentrating on the extent of the congruence between the measures directed at the Jews and the heretics. The *Basilica* text transmits the original Justinianic disposition that several categories of heretics (including also the Manicheans and the pagans) "and those who worship the Jewish religion, shall give no evidence at all. All the others... [i.e. the other heretics],"²¹⁴ although disqualified from giving evidence against Orthodox Christians, are allowed, nevertheless, to legally act in cases involving testaments and contracts, and they can give evidence in court against heretic defendants. By classifying the Jews in the first group, that of the totally incapacitated heretics,

²⁰⁸ K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *IGR*, Vol. 1, (Leipzig, 1856).

²⁰⁹ 30:16 (*JLSM* no. [345], p. 172); C21:1:45 (*JLSM* no. [251], p. 123).

²¹⁰ L. Sgutas, "Μιχαηλ αντυπατου και κριτου του Ατταλειωτου ποιημα νομικον," *Θεμικς*, 8 (1858), pp. 47–155; repr. in Zepos, *IGR*, Vol. 7, (Athens, 1931), 409–97.

²¹¹ 3:3 (*JLSM* no. [346], p. 172) = C1:1:34 (*JLSM* no. [237], p. 116).

²¹² 3:148 (*JLSM* no. [347], p. 172) = C1:1:42 (*JLSM* no. [245], p. 118); 3:235 (*JLSM* no. [348], p. 173) = B60:54:23 (*JLSM* no. [228], p. 114)—the parallel C text; 3:237 (*JLSM* no. [349], p. 173) = B60:54:31 (*JLSM* no. [232], p. 114)—the parallel C text.

²¹³ H. J. Scheltema and D. Holwerda, *Basilicorum libri LX*, Ser. B, *Scholia*, I–IX, (Groningen, 1953–1985).

²¹⁴ "Των αιρετικων οι μεν Μανιχατοι... και οι την Ιουδαιικην θρησκειαν σεβοντες εν μηδενι μαρτυρειτωσαν. Οι δε λοιποι..." (*JLSM* no. [225], p. 113).

the law set off a series of difficulties, theoretical as well as practical, which the commentators attempted to solve by differentiating between the Jews and the heretics in general or, alternatively, between the Jews and the first-group heretics. An opinion cited under the name of Theodoros asserts: "Note that the Hebrews are not named in the list of the abominated; my master Stephanos was of this opinion."²¹⁵ Another opinion, attributed to Thalelaios, seems to adopt the same line of argument when it distinguishes between "the heretics" on the one hand, and "those who worship the Jewish religion" and, again, "the Jews," on the other hand.²¹⁶ The counter-argument—that the Jews are explicitly named among the sects of the first group—was rebutted on the grounds that "those who worship the Jewish religion" should be identified with the Nestorians rather than the Jews. An unattributed opinion cited their claims: "The law does not speak about the Jews (for where there are no Orthodox defendants they give evidence legally, as the laws say about them) but about the Nestorians, in so far as they think, like the Jews, that Christ was entirely different from the Divine Logos, and believe in separate Substances."²¹⁷ The legal capacity of the Jews to bequeath in testament was further asserted in a *scholion* to 38:1:15 on the grounds that they have the capacity to serve as tutors, and "only those have it who can be tutors."²¹⁸

Several issues concerning proselytism were treated by the scholiasts. They restated the prohibition on circumcising non-Jews, the mandatory punishment under the law on castration for circumcising, and the complementary right of the Jews alone to circumcise their sons.²¹⁹ On the cognate issue of the purchase of Christian slaves by Jews they reaffirmed the general prohibition, deduced from a similar law in regard to the Samaritans that such slaves are to be considered free immediately

²¹⁵ "Σημειώσαι δε οτι τοις συναριθμηθεισι μυσαροις ου συναριθμουνται οι Εβραιοι. ταυτης γαρ της δοξης εγενετο Στεφανος ο εμος διδασκαλος." (*JLSM* no. [252], p. 124).

²¹⁶ *JLSM* no. [253], p. 125.

²¹⁷ "Ιουδαιικην θρησκειαν σεβοντες—Η διαταξις ου τους Ιουδαιους φησιν (ουτοι γαρ ενθα μη εστιν ορθοδοξος αντιδικος ορθως μαρτυρουσιν, ως οι περι αυτων νομοι φασιν), αλλα τους Νεστοριανους, καθο και αυτοι τοις Ιουδαιοις επισης ψιλον ανθρωπον οιονται τον Χριστον αλλον τουτον ειναι και αλλον τον θειον λογον εν διηρημεναις ταις υποστασεσι δοξαζοντες." (*JLSM* no. [254], p. 125). The other opinion is in *JLSM* no. [256], p. 126.

²¹⁸ "Ουκουν εχουσιν οι Ιουδαιοι τεσταμεντιφακτιονα. Μονοι γαρ οι ταυτην εχοντες επιτροπεουσιν." (*JLSM* no. [257], p. 126).

²¹⁹ "Μονοις τοις Ιουδαιοις απο διαταξεως Πιου επιτετραπται τους ιδιους υιους περιτεμνειν" (*scholion* to 60:39:7, #3; see also 1, 2).

on purchase, and expanded on the punishment to be imposed on any non-Christian buyer of a Christian slave: a fine of 30 pounds of gold if he entered such transaction ignoring the slave's Christian status, but the death penalty if he was aware of it.²²⁰ Other *scholia* deny Christian apostates to Judaism the right to bequeath in testament²²¹ and determine that appeals against legacies on these grounds can be made within five consecutive years after the apostate's death, "for this is the time-limit determined for cases *De inofficioso*."²²² On the matter of the political capacity of the Jews, the scholiasts faithfully transmit the Justinianic dispositions obliging them to perform all duties that do not transgress their religion, to serve as *Bouleutai* and *Taxeotai* without enjoying any privilege associated with these functions,²²³ and, as a rule—"they have exemption from *liturgy* only in those matters that they are forbidden to perform by reason of their religion."²²⁴

Three reference-books to the *Basilica* reflect its continuous legal relevance in general and the stable topicality of its Jewry-law dispositions in particular. The *Synopsis Basilicorum Maior*,²²⁵ an alphabetical index of references to the *Basilica* supplemented by extracts and abstracts of texts, was composed towards the middle of the tenth century but evolved with the transformation of the *Basilica*; its latest (and extant) version refers to Recension C, and should be dated, therefore, later than the eleventh century. Under the letter I—"On the Jews" (ΙΠΕΡΙ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ)—it carries 19 Jewry-law articles, consisting of cross-references, parallel rulings and *scholia* dealing with protection,²²⁶ jurisdiction²²⁷ (*inter alia* the inflexible definition attributed to Theodoros: "Every Hebrew should live his life according to the laws of the Romans

²²⁰ *Scholion* to 60:54:23, #1.

²²¹ As a general rule: "Οι γαρ απο Χριστιανων ου καλως διατιθενται δηλονοτι" (*Scholion* to 60:54:21, #1).

²²² "Ουτος ο χρονος τη δεινοFFικιοσο ωρισται." (*ibid.* #2).

²²³ *Scholion* to 38:1:15, #5.

²²⁴ "εκεινων γαρ μονων εχουσιν αλειτουρησιαν ατινα κωλυονται πραττειν δια την ιδιαν θρησκευιαν." (*ibid.*, #6).

²²⁵ K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *IGR*, Vol. 5, (Leipzig, 1869).

²²⁶ *JLSM* nos. [265]–[267], [275], [276].

²²⁷ *JLSM* nos. [268]–[274].

and not according to the laws of Moses,²²⁸ circumcision, proselytizing, conversion,²²⁹ and owning Christian slaves.²³⁰

The *Synopsis Basilicorum Minor*,²³¹ an alphabetical dictionary compiled probably in the thirteenth century and designed for the non-professional user, borrowed its material from the *Ponema nomikon* of Michael Attaliotes and the *Synopsis Basilicorum Maior*. It comprises 9 Jewry-law articles, all concise precepts, on the topics of mixed marriages,²³² proselytizing and conversion,²³³ protection,²³⁴ and jurisdiction.²³⁵ The third reference-book, the *Tipoukeitos*,²³⁶ a table of contents and parallel texts to the *Basilica*, was composed towards the end of the eleventh century or during the twelfth, by a certain judge Patzes.²³⁷ It provides concise summaries—mainly in the form of precepts—of 10 Jewry-law texts, seven from C1:1²³⁸ and three from C60:54.²³⁹ They bear on the same topics as the previous work, adding, however, the disposition safeguarding Jewish religious holidays and the prohibition on building new synagogues.

VI. JEWRY-LAW IN BYZANTINE CANON LAW

A. General Characteristics

Canon law applied to Christians within the confines of the Church, but it impacted indirectly on the Jews as well, by limiting or banning forms of interaction between Jews and Christians that the Church condemned as conducive to apostasy. It targeted consequently direct religious contacts as well as other types of social interaction, even ‘virtual’ interaction stigmatized as “Judaizing,” i.e. activities inspired

²²⁸ “Πας Εβραϊος κατα τους Ρωμαιων νομους πολιτευεσθω και μη κατα τους Μωσαικους,” (ibid., no. [271], p. 131).

²²⁹ *JLSM* nos. [277], [279]–[282].

²³⁰ *JLSM* nos. [278], [283].

²³¹ K. E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *IGR*, Vol. 2, (Leipzig, 1856), letter I.

²³² *JLSM* no. [284].

²³³ *JLSM* nos. [285], [286], [292].

²³⁴ *JLSM* nos. [287], [291].

²³⁵ *JLSM* nos. [288]–[290].

²³⁶ Originally Τι που κειται = *What is where*.

²³⁷ C. Ferrini and I. Mercati, M. Κριτου του Πατζη Τιπουκειτος, *sive librorum LX Basilicorum summarium*, Libri I–XII (*Studi e Testi*, 25), (Rome, 1914).

²³⁸ C1:1:11, 34, 39, 40, 42–44. See *JLSM* no. [293], p. 138.

²³⁹ C60:54:20 (twice), 21 (= B60:54,23, 24).

by Judaism as a body of practices and beliefs rather than by actual, living Jews.

Conciliar legislation—canons decreed by Ecumenical and local councils, propagated and enforced through the regular ecclesiastical channels—constituted the primary stratum of this body of canon-law. Their duration and their area of enforcement were much enhanced by means of the second stratum in this expanding body, authoritative collections of canons that combined canonical material with imperial laws. This genre is represented, in the present study, by the *Collection of Canons in L Titles*; it was compiled between 540 and 560 by the jurist Iohannes Scholasticus, who revised it about 570, shortly after his elevation to the patriarchal see of Constantinople.²⁴⁰ It remained popular up to the twelfth century and well beyond. The most important as well as the most successful work of the *Nomocanon* type is, however, the *Nomocanon in XIV Titles*. Issued between 629 and 640, it underwent at least three major revisions: its second recension (the *Syntagma*) appeared in 883,²⁴¹ the third was carried out by Theodoros Bestes around 1080, and the fourth—based on the second recension—was completed by Balsamon in 1198. The third stratum in this body consists of the rich exegetical literature that evolved around this legislative core. It is represented—for our present purpose—by three of its outstanding figures,²⁴² namely Alexios Aristenos, jurist and judge (νομοφυλαξ, πρωτεκδικος, δικαιοδοτης—*Nomofulax*, *Protekdikos*, *Dikaiodotes*), whose commentary on the canons was written at the request of Johannes II Comnenos (1118–1143); Johannes Zonaras, head of the civil courts in Constantinople (μεγας δρουγγαριος της βγλης—*Megas Drungarios tes Vigles*) and high court functionary (πρωτασηκρητις—*Protasecretis*), whose commentary on the canons was completed after 1161; and the better known of the three—Theodoros Balsamon, νομοφυλαξ and χαρτοφυλαξ (*Nomofulax* and *Chartofulax*) of the Great Church in Constantinople, whose commentary on the canons and the *Nomocanon in XIV Titles* (completed before 1195)

²⁴⁰ V. Benešević, *Ioannis Scholastici Synagoga L Titulorum*, in: *Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Abteilung*, N. F. Heft 14, (Munich, 1937).

²⁴¹ V. Benešević, *Syntagma XIV titulorum sine scholiis secundum versionem Paleoslovenicam, adjectu textu Graeco e vetustissimis codicibus manuscriptis exarato*, Vol. 1, (Saint-Petersburg, 1906).

²⁴² G. A. Rallès and M. Potlès, *Συνταγμα των θειων και ιερων κανωνων*, (Athens, 1852–1859) (the *scholia* henceforth quoted as *Trip. Coll.*).

was commissioned by Manuel I Comnenos and Patriarch Michael of Anchialos.

B. Canonical Dispositions

i. *Canons of the Apostles*

The earliest compilation with Jewry-law canons is the apocryphal *Canons of the Apostles*, compiled about the end of the fourth century in Syria and considered authentic in the Greek East but not in the Latin West.²⁴³ It carries four canons of this type, three of which associate the Jews with heretics and the pagans as subjects of exclusion, and only one that bears upon the Jews alone. These last two prohibitions are also found in two canons attributed to an alleged Council of Laodicea.²⁴⁴

The first of the four canons penalizes Christians who “in human fear of a Jew, pagan or heretic... [abjured] the name of Christ... [or] that of the clergy.” It does not refer, obviously, to apostasy, but to lesser, temporary lapses, still echoing the persecutions of the third and the fourth centuries, but it was open to broader interpretations in later periods, ranging from limited Judaizing to outright apostasy.²⁴⁵

The second canon imposes sanctions on clerics and laymen entering a Jewish or a heretical synagogue [sic] for the purpose of praying.²⁴⁶ Zonaras qualified that act as “a great sin” and “lawbreaking” on strictly religious grounds: starting with the quotation “For what concord hath Christ with Belial?”²⁴⁷ He maintained that the synagogal cult (which he perceived, probably unconsciously, as sacrificial) was not only useless for the Jews, but also prohibited by their own Law, “how much more so is a Christian—who joins in prayer those denying Christ—to be judged a breaker of the law?”²⁴⁸ This argument signified, obviously, an ominous deviation from the traditional Roman recognition of the synagogue as an authorized religious institution. Balsamon, on the

²⁴³ F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, (Paderborn, 1905).

²⁴⁴ Canons 37, 38, *JLSM* nos. [806], [807], p. 463.

²⁴⁵ “δια φοβον ανθρωπινου Ιουδαιου η Ελληνος η αιρετικου αρνησηται... το ονομα του Χριστου... του κληρικου.” (Canon 62, *JLSM* no. [1], p. 26).

²⁴⁶ Canon 65, *JLSM* no. [2], p. 26 = *Coll. 50 Titles*, 37:3, *JLSM* no. [103], pp. 59–60 = *Nomocanon XIV Titles*, 2nd Recension, Part II, Canon 65, *JLSM* no. [120], p. 66.

²⁴⁷ 2 *Cor.* 6:15.

²⁴⁸ “Μεγα αμαρτημα ο κανων ηγειται... ει δ’ εκεινοι εις τας συναγωγας αυτων εισιοντες παρανομουσι, πολλω πλεον Χριστιανος τοις του Χριστου ανααιρεταις συνευχομενος, κριθειη παρανομων.” (*Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [353], p. 175).

other hand, saw in this interdiction another application of the policy of exclusion in regard to the Jews, appositely quoting canon 11 of the Council *In Trullo*.²⁴⁹

The third canon in this group prohibits all Christians from fasting with the Jews, celebrating holidays with them, and accepting their festive gifts, such as unleavened bread (an unmistakable reference to *Passover*).²⁵⁰ Both Zonaras and Balsamon interpreted this canon in the context of the general exclusion of the excommunicates and the heretics, but they disagreed on its practical implications. Zonaras allows that the Jews are not formally “cut-off or excommunicate,” but he qualifies them, nonetheless, as “killers of Christ, farther from the assembly of the believers or, better still, an accursed people,” all of which amounts, in the end, to a status not much different from that of those “cut-off and excommunicate.”²⁵¹ Hence the strict punishments decreed, hence also their extension to anyone guilty of Judaizing, “even if he should not share their beliefs but give to the many cause for scandal and suspicion as one who honors and celebrates the Jewish rites, and is believed to be also simultaneously defiled by living with [them].”²⁵² This call for a religious and social exclusion of the Jews is all the more implacable for being defined in the dichotomous terms of purity-defilement, and by its application to apparent as well as actual Judaizing. Balsamon opts for a more lenient course. He does not draw a parallel between those guilty under the present canon and the Judaizers: “Do not say that such people Judaize, and that they should be punished in all events as sharers of the same beliefs with the Jews... Say, instead, that those people, although Orthodox, condemn the ecclesiastical teaching and live immorally; they are to be treated moderately and chastised as scandalmongers.”²⁵³ The essential

²⁴⁹ *Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [354], p. 176.

²⁵⁰ Canon 70, *JLSM* no. [3], p. 27 = *Coll. I Titles*, 37:4, *JLSM* no. [104], p. 60 = *Nomocanon XIV Titles*, 2nd Recension, Part II, Canon 70, *JLSM* no. [121], p. 66.

²⁵¹ “ανθρωπων ουκ αφωρισμενων, ουδε ακοινωνητων, αλλα χριστοκτονων, και πορρω της των πιστων ομηγυρεως, η μαλλον καταρατων.” (*Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [356], p. 177).

²⁵² “Καν γαρ μη τα εκεινων φρονη αλλα γε πολλοις σκανδαλου διδωσιν αφορμην, και υπονοιαν καθ’ εαυτου, ως τας Ιουδαιικας τιμων τελετας· αμα δε και μιαινεσθαι πιστευεται τη εκεινων συναναστροφη.” (*ibid.*).

²⁵³ “Μη ειπης δε τοτους ιουδαιζειν, ως και τοις Ιουδαιοις ομοφρονας οντας... Αλλ’ ειπε, τουτους ορθοδοξους μεν ειναι, καταφρονητας δε των εκκλησιαστικων παραδοσεων, και αδιαφορας ζωντας· καντευθεν μετριατερας αυτους, ως σκανδαλοποιους κολαζεσθαι...” (*Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [357], p. 178).

difference in faith and practice between the Orthodox on the one hand and the Jews and heretics on the other implies, to his mind, exclusive incompatibility in holidays as well: “We do not fast whenever they do, as on account of the warning to Nineve or on account of the other occasions accepted by them.”²⁵⁴ It appears, from his report, that the prohibition on Jews’ unleavened bread was adduced by canonists as an argument against the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist, of unquestioned actuality in the schism between the Greek East and the Latin West, but entirely unconnected with the Jews and their celebration of Passover.

The fourth and last canon prohibits Christians from contributing oil to either a pagan temple or a Jewish synagogue and lighting lamps on Jewish holidays.²⁵⁵ Zonaras and Balsamon sharpen, on this occasion, their condemnation of Judaizing. For Zonaras anyone guilty of such behavior “shall be counted as one who shares their beliefs.”²⁵⁶ Balsamon starts again with the general truth proclaimed in *2 Cor.* 6:15 “that there is no communion between believer and infidel,” practically agrees with Zonaras that the condemned should be considered as sharing “in the beliefs of the infidels,” and remarks—almost wistfully—that “the present canon chastises such a man very lightly [i.e. mere excommunication], but others punish him more severely.”²⁵⁷ Aristenos made use of the same general principle in his commentary to the corresponding canon of the Council of Laodicea, quoting *2 Cor.* 6:14: “There is no communion between light and darkness.”²⁵⁸

ii. Conciliar Legislation

The series of authentic Byzantine conciliar legislation relating to the Jews starts with the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, which forbade married lower clergy (*Readers* and *Cantors*) to give

²⁵⁴ “Δια γαρ τουτο και ημεις ταναντια τοις Ιουδαιοις και τοις αλλοις αιρετικοις φρονουντες και πραττοντες, καταλυομεν ανενδοιαστως, οταν εκεινοι νηστευωσι, τυχον δια την κατα της Νινευι απειλην, η και δι’ ετερας αιτιας δοκουσας αυτοις.” (ibid.).

²⁵⁵ 71, *JLSM* no. [4], p. 27 = *Coll. L Titles*, 37:5, *JLSM* no. [105], p. 60 = *Nomocanon XIV Titles*, 2nd Recension, Part II, Canon 70, *JLSM* no. [122], p. 66.

²⁵⁶ “και τα αυτα εκεινοις φρονειν λογισθησεται.” (*Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [358], p. 179).

²⁵⁷ “ουδεμια κοινωνια πιστω μετα απιστω... δια το λογιζεσθαι τουτον τοις απιστοις ομοφρονα· και απο μεν του παροντος κανονος, ελαφροτερον ο τοιουτος κολαζεται· εξ ετερων δε μεγαλως τιμωρεται.” (*Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [359], pp. 179–80).

²⁵⁸ “Ουδεμια κοινωνια φωτι προς σκοτος.” (*Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [375], p. 193).

their children in marriage to Jews, pagans, or heretics unless the non-Orthodox promises to convert.²⁵⁹ While Zonaras explains the interdiction on mixed marriages with Jews on grounds of the Jewish crime of deicide,²⁶⁰ Balsamon uses the occasion—in discussing the appropriate way to baptize children born in such mixed marriages—to classify the Jews as a species of heresy, a definition with obvious implications as regards their legal status: “Know, therefore, that the heretics are divided in two, into those that accept the mystery and the Godly Descent according to our way, yet err in certain matters...and those who do not accept this at all and are infidels, namely, the Jews and the pagans...Both are made distinct even under the common term [i.e. αιρετικοι].”²⁶¹

The *Quinisext (In Trullo)* Council of 691 decreed a wide-ranging social exclusion in addition to the ban on Christians receiving the *Passover* unleavened bread: “No one...should associate with them, or call on them in sickness and receive from them medicines, or bathe with them in baths at all.”²⁶² Balsamon, again, is not only the most profuse of the three commentators, but the more inclined to induce general truths from the canons he discusses. He expounds the present canon, accordingly, on the principle that the “Godly Fathers wish us to have no communion with the Jews.” Similarly, his affirmation that only the celebration of the Eucharist with unleavened bread “in the Jewish manner” is prohibited rather than the mundane everyday use of unleavened bread rests on the argument that it would have been inconceivable for the Fathers to sanction such celebration since they had “abolished all the Jewish holidays.”²⁶³

²⁵⁹ Canon 14, *JLSM* no. [800], p. 458 = *Nomocanon XIV Titles*, 2nd Recension, Part II, Chalcedon Canon 14, *JLSM* no. [123], pp. 66–7.

²⁶⁰ “Ιουδαιους δε, τους Χριστοκτονους” (*Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [361], pp. 180–1).

²⁶¹ “Οιδας γαρ, οτι οι αιρετικοι εις δυο διαιρουνται, εις τε τους δεχομενους μεν το καθ’ ημας μυστηριον, και την θεικην συγκαταβασιν, εν τισι δε σφαλλομενους... και εις τους παντη μη δεχομενους τουτο, και οντας απιστους, Ιουδαιους δηλονοτι και Ελληνας... Τω ονοματι γουν της κοινωνιας εδηλωθησαν και αμφοτερα.” (*Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [362], p. 182).

²⁶² “Μηδεις... τοιουτοις προσοικειουσθω η εν νοσοις προσκαλεισθω και ιατρειας παρ’ αυτων λαμβανετω, η εν βαλανειοις τουτοις παντελως συλλουεσθω.” (Canon 11, *JLSM* no. [802], p. 460) = *Nomocanon XIV Titles*, 2nd Recension, Part II, *In Trullo*, Canon 11, *JLSM* no. [124], p. 67.

²⁶³ “Μηδεμιαν κοινωνιαν εχειν ημας μετα των Ιουδαιων οι θειοι Πατερες θελοντες... Οτι δε ουδε εις νουν ηλθε τοις αγιοις Πατρασι το εορταζειν ημας δια αζυμων, καθως τουτο και παρα των Ιουδαιων γινεται... δηλον εστιν απο του καταργησαι αυτους πασαν ιουδαιικην εορτην.” (*Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [365], p. 185).

The Second Council of Nicaea (787) imposed stringent conditions on receiving converted Jews, and decreed that false converts should be expelled to their former Jewish status.²⁶⁴ This canon could have been originally motivated by the possible existence of crypto-Jews among the forced converts under Leo III, though the considerable time that elapsed since that forced conversion in 721/2, the general formulation of the canon and its rubric (“That Jews should not be received unless they convert wholeheartedly”),²⁶⁵ and the clause on the advantages denied to the false converts in regard to the ownership of slaves,²⁶⁶ suggest a general ruling, entirely conformable to a policy documented in the civil Jewry-law from Justinian’s *Code* to the *Basilica*²⁶⁷ on the one hand, and to the existence of crypto-Jews among those who were enticed by the advantages promised to converts from Judaism, on the other. This interpretation was shared by the *Nomocanon in XIV Titles*²⁶⁸ as well as by Zonaras (with a detailed list of the Jewish practices still followed by these crypto-Jews),²⁶⁹ Balsamon (whose comment quotes three pertinent *Basilica* texts),²⁷⁰ and Aristenos, who sums it up rather peremptorily: “Hebrews shall not be received unless they appear to convert with a pure heart. Clear.”²⁷¹

Canon 129 of the Council of Carthage in 419 was received into Byzantine canon law thanks to its inclusion in the *Nomocanon in XIV Titles*. It determined several categories of legal incapacity in preferring charges, among them that of the “infamous”—actors, “persons given to shameful pursuits,” the heretics, the pagans, and the Jews. The “infamous” were granted the right, nonetheless, to prefer charges and to give testimony in their own cases.²⁷² The three commentators endeavored to clarify the canon’s overly pithy statements through

²⁶⁴ Canon 8 (*JLSM* no. [804], p. 461).

²⁶⁵ “Οτι τους Εβραιοους ου χρη δεχεσθαι, ει μηπω εξ ειλικρινους καρδιας επιστρεψωσιν. (ibid.)

²⁶⁶ “μητε δουλον ωνησασθαι η κτασθαι” (ibid.).

²⁶⁷ *CJ*. 1:12:1 (*JRIL* no. 26) = *Basilica* C1:1:44 (*JLSM* no. [369], p. 190).

²⁶⁸ Part II, *Nicaea II*, 8 (*JLSM* no. [125], pp. 67–8).

²⁶⁹ *Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [367], pp. 186–7.

²⁷⁰ *Trip. Comm.*, *JLSM* no. [368], pp. 188–9.

²⁷¹ “Εβραιοους μη χρηναι προσδεχεσθαι, ει μη φαινουντο εξ ειλικρινους καρδιας επιστρεφοντες. Σαφης.” (*Trip. Comm.*, *Nicaea II*, c.8, *JLSM* no. [369], p. 190).

²⁷² “Omnes etiam infamiae maculis aspersi, idest histriones ac turpitudinibus subiectae personae, haeretici etiam sive pagani seu iudaei” (*JLSM* no. [808], p. 464.) = *Nomocanon XIV Titles*, 2nd Recension, Part II, *Carthage*, Canon 129, *JLSM* no. [128], p. 69.

further classifications and distinctions. Aristenos starts by repeating the canon's sweeping decree, but proceeds to restrict its ambit in accordance with the quality of the incapacitated (slaves, freedmen, the previously condemned etc.) and of the accused (bishops, clerics, manumitters). The Jews (together with the heretics and the pagans) are legally incapacitated because they "have a religion different from ours... they shall not be received as accusers or witnesses against bishops or clerics; for they seek nothing else than to attach blame and blemish to the priests' reputations and cause disorder in the Church."²⁷³ Zonaras²⁷⁴ and Balsamon²⁷⁵ offer an identical restrictive interpretation: that particular legal incapacity applies only to charges preferred against men in orders, but it does not apply when the incapacitated act in their proper disputes. Both avoid any specific mention of the Jews in this context, referring generally to "heretics" and "infidels" (απιστοι).

iii. *Civil Jewry-Law in Canon Law*

The peculiar symbiotic relationship that united Church and State in Byzantium conduced the Byzantine canonists to rely on the civil law to a considerable extent, with self-evident implications for the Jewry-law. The typically Byzantine *Nomocanon* genre is, probably, the most characteristic manifestation of that course. One can practically follow the gradual integration of the imperial legislation into the evolving canon-law system—generally and in regard to the Jewry-law in particular—in the textual history of the *Nomocanon in XIV Titles*. While its first version (629) postponed the summaries of the relevant civil law texts to its third—and last—part, the second recension (883) already included in its first part references to the civil-law texts assembled in its third part: civil law thus ceased to be a mere appendage to canon law and became an integral element in a more coherent system. The third recension (1080) inserted complete civil law texts into the first part, *Basilica* texts alongside the Justinean heritage. The fourth recension (1198) enhanced the civil law component even further, by introducing *scholia* with references to corresponding texts in

²⁷³ "της ημετερας θρησκειας οντες αλλοτριου, ως Ιουδαιοι, αιρετικοι τε, και Ελληνες· ου παραδεχθησονται εις κατηγοριαν η εις μαρτυριαν επισκοπων, η κληρικων, δια το μηδεν τι αυτους ετερον σπευδειν, η μωμον και σπιλον ταις υποληψεσι προσαπειν των ιερεων, και ταραχας επαγειν τη εκκλησια." (*Trip. Comm., Carthage, Canon 129, JLSM no. [378], p. 197*).

²⁷⁴ *Trip. Comm., Carthage, Canon 129, JLSM no. [376], p. 193.*

²⁷⁵ *Trip. Comm., Carthage, Canon 129, JLSM no. [377], pp. 194–5.*

the *Basilica* as well as to pertinent Justinianean texts that were not received into the *Basilica*. Further references are found in *scholia* that were added to a particular manuscript tradition and were designated as *Auctaria*.

No less than 41 imperial Jewry-law texts are thus quoted (some more than once) in the fourth recension of the *Nomocanon in XIV Titles*, either *in extenso* or in references: 21 from Justinian's corpus—16 from the *Code*,²⁷⁶ 3 from the *Digest*²⁷⁷ and 2 from the *Novels*²⁷⁸—and 20 from the *Basilica*.²⁷⁹ They are distributed among eight titles in 11 articles, though a sizeable number—8 *Code* and 13 *Basilica* laws—are concentrated in 12:2.²⁸⁰ The *Code* texts are quoted in the Greek translation of the *Collectio Tripartita*, while the *Novels* were received from Athanasios' *Epitome*; only one text—the 12:2 *Auctaria* translation of *CJ. 1:9:17*—derives directly from the original text in the *Code*.²⁸¹

This is an impressive body of laws. By its size, in the first place: once the 10 canonical texts bearing specifically on the Jews are added to those received from the civil-law sources it amounts to 51 texts, far outstripping the 35 laws in the entire Justinianic corpus. And it represents a new approach to Jewry-law on two counts. First, the acknowledgment—if not outright adoption—of these civil-law dispositions by the Church was bound to have at least some effect in a society increasingly molded by the Church (within the Empire and in the daughter-churches established under Byzantine missionary auspices), and even more so after the dissolution of the imperial government, temporarily under Latin rule and finally after the fall of the Empire to the Turks. Maintaining a national-religious identity under Ottoman rule (and in independent Christian states such as Russia as well) implied, usually, maintaining the ecclesiastical heritage and organizational structures salvaged from Byzantium. Secondly, the new approach to the Jewry-law consists in the replacement of the diachronic legal conception typical to the Roman law with the synchronic view characteristic of canon-law. The maxim that encapsulated the Roman approach—"Lex posterior derogat priori" ("a later law derogates an

²⁷⁶ 1:7:1, 2; 1:9:1–2, 4, 6–9, 13–14, 17–18; 1:10:1; 1:12:1; 3:12:6.

²⁷⁷ 27:1:15; 48:8:11; 50:2:3.

²⁷⁸ Nos. 131, 146.

²⁷⁹ BC1:1:43, 44; B1:1:49, 50, 51; 60:54:23, 24; C1:1:30, 33–44; 1:1:53.

²⁸⁰ 3:15; 4:14; 6:3; 7:4; 9:25; 10:8; 12:2, 3, 9, 13, 15.

²⁸¹ *JLSM* no. [171], p. 84.

earlier one”)—guaranteed, in principle, a dynamic legislative activity, a constant process of legal adaptation to changing realities. Even the two great Roman *Codices*, the *Theodosianus* and the *Justinianus*, each supposedly representing a coherent system entirely free of contradictory elements, were chronologically organized and their texts carefully dated in a sequential order as a prerequisite to establishing their validity. Validity, in this perspective, depended on the relative temporal position of each law in relation to other pertinent laws. Canon law was clearly grounded on the opposite assumption: its constitutive authoritative documents were recognized as such precisely because of their sacred, a-temporal nature, from the Scriptures to the more ‘historical’ documents that originated in strictly historical figures such as the Fathers of the Church or Fathers assembled in Council, inspired by the Holy Ghost and acting, so to speak, as its mere mouthpiece and selfless implement. Renewal, in this perspective, depended on subsequent interpretation rather than on derogation of the old. While the Roman civil-law followed a model of validity that was in principle relative and conditional, the validity canon law claimed for its laws was, by definition, absolute and unconditional. The implications of this situation on the legal status of the Jews are still to be studied, but there can be little doubt that the inclusion of the entire Jewry-law from Justinian onwards within the ambit of the canon law—even if in a subsidiary position—was bound to impact on both the duration and the efficacy of its implementation.

The extent to which this body of laws was utilized by practicing canonists is indicated by the textual changes they introduced into its texts, the commentaries they attached to them, and, above all, by their search for Justinean legal texts that were not received into the *Basilica*, the easily available civil *Code* in force.

A certain amount of textual modification was due to the usual textual deterioration that accompanied any manuscript transmission, yet one must bear in mind that this type of ‘innocent’ change—no less than intentional alteration—resulted in a modified content. Such new readings appear in the *Auctaria* to 12:2, which imposed punishment on any non-Jew attempting to establish prices for the merchandise of the Jews—the noun “alien” [i.e. non-Jew] was replaced by the adverb

“otherwise,” obscuring the law’s intention;²⁸² in the same *Auctaria*, the reference to the “violence” committed against the Jews was replaced by one referring to “legal execution” imposed on them, rendering the whole text meaningless, certainly as a measure of protection;²⁸³ and the *Auctaria* to 12:9, finally, replaced the original disposition allowing Jews to serve as *tutors* to non-Jews with one allowing them to serve as *tutors* among Jews, suppressing the reference to the non-Jews and obscuring, by the same token, the substance of the law.²⁸⁴

The *Auctaria* to 4:14 quotes a rarely documented *Basilica* law (1:1:31) to the effect that Jews are forbidden “to trade in slaves, lest they deliver them to their coreligionists and cause them to join their superstition.”²⁸⁵ While this text echoes *CJ.* 1:10:1, it targets in particular slave trading, a topic that Justinian ignored—his text dealt with private acquisition and possession of non-Jewish slaves by Jews rather than with their commerce—but which proved in time to be of considerable importance and relevance, as the correspondence of Gregory the Great amply testifies.²⁸⁶ A typical example of the close, comparative reading by the canonists of Justinian’s *Code* and the *Basilica* can be seen in a statement in the *scholion* to 9:25, that the *Basilica* omits the death penalty Justinian imposed on proselytizers: “this was not received into the *Basilica*.”²⁸⁷ It probably refers to Recension B, which lacks, in fact, this measure.

The later resurrection of Cornelia Salvia’s ghost, complete with her unenforceable legacy to the Jewish community in Antioch, provides a striking example of the interest the canonists took in Justinian’s Jewry-law dispositions as valid norms of religious significance. The gist of Caracalla’s rescript in that affair was transferred into the Greek version of Justinian’s *Code* (in the *Collectio Tripartita*) as a puzzling text, whose legal significance was by then as obscure as the case from which it was derived.²⁸⁸ Rejected—perhaps for that very reason—by the edi-

²⁸² The original *ετερος* replaced with *ετερος*. See *JLSM* no. [165], p. 83.

²⁸³ The original *βιαζεσθω* corrupted to *εκβιβαζεσθω*. See *JLSM* no. [168], p. 83.

²⁸⁴ The original reading in *Dig.* 27:1:15—and *Coll. Trip.* 2:27:1:17—“των μη Ιουδαιων” (= of non-Jews) was corrupted to “μετα των Ιουδαιων” (= among the Jews). See *JLSM* no. [180], p. 87.

²⁸⁵ “Κωλυομεν τους Ιουδαιους και ανδραποδα εμπορευεσθαι μη ποτε ταυτα τοις συνθηρσκευταις αποδομενοι παρασκευασαιεν αυτα της εαυτων κακοδοξιας γενεσθαι” (*JLSM* no. [137], p. 72).

²⁸⁶ See especially 6:29 and 9:105 *JLSM* nos. [713], [718], pp. 429–30, 436.

²⁸⁷ “τουτο γαρ ουκ ετεθη εις τα βασιλικά” (*JLSM* no. [150], p. 77).

²⁸⁸ *CJ.* 1:9:1 = *Coll. Trip.* 1:9:1.

tors of the *Basilica*, it was reclaimed by the *Nomocanon in XIV Titles* in its *nomos* section. Its very location in 6:3—“On those who offer to synagogues or to the temples of the pagans”²⁸⁹—already indicated an interpretation bearing on the illegal participation by Christians in Jewish and pagan cults, and the canonist clarified it further by quoting *CJ.* 1:11:9, “if something is donated or bequeathed for the maintenance of paganism, the city shall seize it.”²⁹⁰ The *scholion* to that article checks the source-references: it confirms that the first law was not received into the *Basilica*, and gives the correct *Basilica* reference (in its third recension: C1:1:14) to the second law, noting that its summary there conforms to the original.²⁹¹

The same text—illustrating the same general norm—was propounded again in the *nomos* section of 12:9, another article consecrated to the illegal participation of Christians in Jewish and pagan cults.²⁹² But while the previous article affirmed the illegality of a legacy assimilated to an act of religious participation, the emphasis here is on the illegal status of the community, regardless of the status of that specific act. The canonist implies that by invalidating Cornelia Salvia’s legacy the law determined the illegality of the community, for *CJ.* 34:5:20 “says that what is left in legacy to a legal body or college is valid. The opposite with illegal bodies,” though he recognizes a way to circumvent that difficulty—“unless what is left in legacy is left to each one in it; in this case it is valid.”²⁹³ But even then the legacy should be invalidated on grounds of the general prohibition on contributing to paganism, i.e. to non-Christian cults. The *scholion* to this article is content, once again, to provide the correct cross-references to the laws cited, in Justinian’s *Code* and in the *Basilica*.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁹ “Περι των προσφεροντων συναγωγαις η ιεροις εθνων” (*JLSM* no. [138], p. 73).

²⁹⁰ “οτι εαν τι δωρηθη η καταλειφθη επι συστασει Ελληνισμου η πολις αυτο λαμβανει.” (*JLSM* no. [139], p. 73).

CJ. 1:9:1 = *Coll. Trip.* 1:9:1.

²⁹¹ *JLSM* no. [140], p. 73.

CJ. 1:9:1 = *Coll. Trip.* 1:9:1.

²⁹² “Περι επισκοπων η κληρικων λαμβανοντων ευλογιας εξ αιρετικων, η Ιουδαιων, η ευχομενων εν εκκλησιαις η εν μοναστηριοις αιρετικων η εθνικων, η σαββατιζοντων, η συνορταζοντων τοις Ιουδαιοις, η προσφεροντων συναγωγαις η ιεροις εθνων.” (*JLSM* no. [177], p. 86).

²⁹³ “Λεγει δε...οτι το ληγατευομενον θεμιτω σωματειω, η συστηματι ερρωται. Το εναντιον δε επι αθεμιτου, πλην ει μη τοις εν τω αυτω καθ’ εκαστον ληγατευθη, τοτε γαρ ερρωται.” (*JLSM* no. [178], p. 86).

²⁹⁴ *JLSM* no. [179], p. 87.

VII. CONTINUITY AND INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

It has been said that the Roman law *Glossatores* in the medieval West posed as if Justinian was still ruling the Empire; Byzantine jurists did not need to pretend, for Justinian did indeed determine much of the legal fabric of the Empire in general and the legal status of the Jews in particular for centuries after his demise, either directly—through his *Corpus*—or indirectly, by means of the numerous private and official translations, and systematic handbooks and codes, civil as well as canonical, that transmitted and retransmitted that legacy. The legal reality of the existence of the Jews in Byzantium through the twelfth century was defined in his formulations, grounded on the legal norms he promulgated, and determined, above all, by the hallmark of his particular legacy on the Jews—its overriding ambiguity. For that legacy embodied two essentially conflicting ideologies, two mutually exclusive drives: Christian active integrationism on the one hand and the Roman latitudinarian approach to society and state on the other hand. Theoretically irreconcilable, they could coexist in a strongly and efficiently governed state committed to both, but such compromises were, by definition, always highly precarious and temporary, liable to be abruptly dissolved in an empire undergoing the complementary processes of deepening Christianization and the dilution of its Roman identity. Precariousness and impermanence characterized, therefore, the existence of the Jews as a recognized heterodox minority in the Byzantine Empire, and even that authorized existence was officially abolished in several forced conversions, state-wide as well as local. No less than five campaigns of forced conversions were initiated by the crown in the course of four centuries: under Heraclius in 630/2, Leo III in 721/2, Basil I (867–886), Leo VI toward the end of the ninth century, and under Romanos Lecapenos in 932. Two further forced conversions were carried out in the thirteenth century, under Theodoros Angelos in 1229 and under Johannes Vatatzes in 1254.

In between these crises the authorized existence of Jews was underpinned by Justinian's Jewry-law, an ambiguous body of laws in that it defined all the Jews as "Romans" and subject in all manner of litigation to the common law and regular courts, but, at the same time, disqualified them from giving evidence in court against Orthodox litigants in "mixed" trials, yet qualified them to give evidence in cases which involved only Jews and, again, in matters pertaining to testaments and contracts. It banned the Jewish judiciary but tacitly accepted Jewish

jurisdiction in cases between Jews. It invalidated the very concept of Jewish self-government, but recognized the right of the Jewish authorities to appoint and employ Jewish price controllers to Jewish merchandise, imposed the duty of collecting the *Aurum Coronarium* on the Jewish *Primates*, and acknowledged the communal functions of *Archipherekitae*, *Presbyters*, and *Didascaloi*. It endorsed an active missionary work among the Jews through material and social inducements, but condemned and rejected “false” and “insincere” converts. It protected synagogues as “places of religion,” but banned the construction of new synagogues and the renovation of old ones. The ambiguity illustrated by these and similar instances resulted in legal innovations designed to make the traditional Jewry-law applicable in spite of—and to a considerable extent because of—that ambivalence, and in extensive abuse and arbitrariness, particularly evident in legal and fiscal impositions.

The principal legal innovation in this respect concerns the personal legal status of the Jews: from its very beginning the Christian Empire recognized them as Roman citizens, and expected them, accordingly, to fulfill all the duties incumbent on the other citizens and forgo any legal privilege or special status that put them outside the common law’s ambit. Yet from its very beginning that state also embarked on a policy of disentanglement in all spheres of life—legal, political, economic, religious, and societal relationships—that rendered that citizenship a largely hollow concept, denuded of most of its practical implications. By 1049, at the latest, that process received official confirmation. An eloquent statement of principle on the legal status of the Jews promulgated by Constantine IX Monomachos ignores any claim to Roman citizenship and affirms the concept of their potentially servile status on religious grounds, not unlike the Western institution of the *servitus camerae*. The emperor declared, while granting in serfdom fifteen “entirely free and subject to no one”²⁹⁵ Jewish families to the Nea Mone Monastery in Chios, that his powers to reduce these free persons to servitude were based on religious considerations: God, in the New Dispensation, “subjected the Jewish nation to the Christian and ordained the believing and the right-thinking people to rule over the

²⁹⁵ “Ἰουδαίους ἐλευτέρους πανταπασιν ὄντας καὶ μηδαμοῦ ὑποκειμένους...” (M. J. Gedeon, “Βυζαντινὰ Χρυσοβύλλα καὶ Πιττακία,” *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀληθεία*, 4 [1883/84], pp. 412–3; *JLSM* no. [341] p. 160).

unbelieving and the senseless.”²⁹⁶ Andronikos II applied that principle of *servitus Imperii* when he declared, in a letter to the Venetian Doge from 1319/20: “Our Jews are a legitimate possession of the Empire.”²⁹⁷

Jews could no longer count, therefore, on rights recognized to free citizens; the exclusionist policies promoted by the Church were now practiced by the state in campaigns of purification—expulsions of Jews from cities and their concentration in virtual ghettos. Some of these were probably due to local initiative, such as the expulsion of the Jews from Sparta at the instigation of Nikon the Metanoite in ca. 985 in order to “purify” the pest-stricken city.²⁹⁸ But the role of the state is unmistakable in the ban on immigration of Jews to Chios issued by Constantine X Dukas in 1062,²⁹⁹ and in the creation of the better known of these ghettos in Constantinople: all the Jewish inhabitants of the city were expelled sometime in the middle of the eleventh century and resettled in an enclosed quarter in Pera, outside the city walls and across the Golden Horn. The ban on their settlement in other parts of the city was maintained until the Latin conquest. Similar ghettos—or at least efforts to isolate the Jews from the Christian population—are known from other cities as well: Eustathios, Patriarch of Thessalonica (1175–ca. 1185), informed the Patriarch of Constantinople that under his predecessors in Thessalonica “the Hebrews were allowed to spread out.... Some of them inhabited Christian ruins which they rebuilt, others inhabited dwelling-houses where Christians lived,”³⁰⁰ and asked for guidance how to deal with this difficult situation. He put the blame on the negligent holy patriarchs with great subtlety and circumspection (“I know not [whether this happened] by their oversight or with their knowledge or in accordance with a certain imperial rescript. This

²⁹⁶ “και τω Χριστιανω φυλω το Ιουδαιικον καθυπεταξε, και το πιστον και ευνουν γενοσ του απιστου καταρχειν και αγνωμονοσ ωκονομησε.” (ibid.).

²⁹⁷ “Iudei quedam appropriata possessio sunt Imperii,” in a rather awkward Latin translation. Quoted from D. Jacoby, “Les quartiers juifs de Constantinople à l’époque byzantine,” *Byzantion*, 37 (1967): 193.

²⁹⁸ See the relevant passage in the Latin translation of that saint’s *Vita* in *PG* cols. 978–80.

²⁹⁹ The relevant passage was summarized and published by B. K. Stephanides in: “Οι κωδικες της Αδριανουπολεωσ,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 14 (1905): 593–4.

³⁰⁰ “παρεχωρηθησαν Εβραιοι πλαντυνηται... και κησαν οι μεν εν ερειποτοπιουσ Χριστιανικοις, ανοικισθεισιν υπ’ αυτων· οι δε και εν οικημασιν, εν οις ωκουν Χριστιανοι.” (Epist. 32, *PG* 136, col. 1299).

has not been clarified.”)³⁰¹ but it becomes perfectly clear that such “spreading out” of Jews was considered by then unacceptable, unless condoned by the Church or authorized expressly and formally by the emperor. Jews were by no means the only population-group targeted by such measures: the heretical Armenians and the Muslims found themselves implicated as well. That comprehensive policy of exclusion and its rationale were lucidly defined by Demetrios Khomatianos, Archbishop of Ochrida, in 1230/34: such people “were permitted to live in Christian lands and cities...except that they do not mix with the Christians, but rather live separately. For this reason places have been designated for each of these nations, either within the city or without, so that they may be restricted to these and shall not extend their dwellings beyond them.”³⁰² Demetrios lists three reasons for their exclusion: convincing them “through the narrowness and restriction of their habitation”³⁰³ that such are the wages of heresy, exposing them to Orthodox missionary influence through frequent association with the Orthodox population, and the material advantages derived from their economic activity. “But if they exceed the limits set for their habitation, not only they must be constrained, but their buildings as well—of whatever kind they might be—should be razed to the ground. They lost long ago the freedom and license concerning such matters.”³⁰⁴ So much for their Roman citizenship.

Almost paradoxically, the concentration of the Jews of Constantinople in the Pera ghetto probably led to the reconstitution of the special judiciary for Jewish litigants. Since the fourth century the imperial authorities consistently condemned and largely dismantled the Jewish judiciary while allowing it half-heartedly to act in certain types of cases, but on some unspecified date they established a special court

³⁰¹ “οὐκ οἶδ’, εἴτε κατὰ λήθην, εἴτε καὶ κατὰ εἰδησὶν ἐκεῖνων, εἴτε καὶ κατὰ θεῖαν τινα κελευσίν. Τοῦτο δὲ οὐχ εὐρίσκειται.” (ibid.)

³⁰² “Ἐν ταῖς Χριστιανῶν χωραῖς καὶ πόλεσιν ἐνδεδόται μὲν ἀρχηθὲν οἰκεῖν...πλὴν οὐκ ἀναμιξὶ μετὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν, ἀλλὰ κεχωρισμένως. Ὅθεν καὶ ἀφορίζονται τοποὶ ἑκάστη τούτων φύλη, εἴτε ἐντὸς πόλεων, εἴτε ἐκτὸς. Ὡστε τούτοις ἐμπεριγραφῆσθαι καὶ μὴ ἐπεκείνα τούτων τὰς οἰκησεις αὐτῶν ἐκτείνεσθαι.” (Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἐπισκοποῦ Κιτροῦ Ἀποκρίσεις πρὸς Κωνσταντινὸν ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Δυραχίου τὸν Καβασιαν, PG 119, col. 977).

³⁰³ “τῷ ἐστενωμένῳ καὶ ἀφωρισμένῳ τῆς τούτων οἰκησεως” (ibid.).

³⁰⁴ “Ἐἰ δὲ τοὺς ὅρους ὑπερβαίνουσι τῆς ἀφορισθείσης αὐτοῖς συνοικησεως, οὐ μόνον αὐτοὶ κωλυθήσονται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ οἰκοδομήματα τούτων, ὅποια δ’ ἂν καὶ ᾖσι, καταστραφήσονται. Το γὰρ ἀνετὰς εἶχειν καὶ εὐπαρρησιαστώως ἐν τοῖς τοιαυτοῖς παλαῖ ἀπώλεσαν.” (ibid.).

for the Jews under the *Strategos tou Stenou*, the *strategos* in charge of the Bosphoros, whose jurisdiction comprised the Pera ghetto. We are not informed about the circumstances that led to its constitution as the unique competent court for Jews or how it actually operated. But we do know from the commentary of Balsamon to *Nomocanon* I, 3,³⁰⁵ dealing with the question of the authority of the positive law as against that of the unwritten usage, that it was abolished by Manuel Comnenos probably in 1166, that it existed for a considerable period of time until then—long enough for Balsamon to qualify its monopoly on this type of litigation as “usage” (συνηθεια), and that since its dissolution Jews were to be charged before any tribunal in the land. Without reading too much into Balsamon’s statement that following the dissolution of that special court the Jews were judged “according to the laws,” a clear indication that the competent court in their regard was determined according to the law rather than to that usage, it is not improbable that the law previously enforced in the court of that *strategos* comprised some Jewish-law elements supplied by Jewish assessors, officially or otherwise.

The entry of the Jews into the regular judicial system—strictly mandatory in ‘mixed’ cases involving Christians and practically unavoidable in cases that required execution by the state organs—brought to light the incapacity of the Jews to take oath in ordinary legal processes. It was a serious problem, for the Roman Law of Procedure required litigants to take oath in various procedural junctures, and Christian Roman law further emphasized the indispensability of such oaths for determining truth and justice. As Jews were exempt, in principle, from all state-imposed duties that transgressed their religion, and in order to assure the efficient running of the courts, a special Jewish-oath was needed, one that would be acceptable to both Christians and Jews.

Three sources testify to the use of such oaths in the Byzantine Empire.³⁰⁶ The first two—an extract made and authenticated in 1147 by Basil Pecules, the Judge of the *Velum in the Hippodrome* from the

³⁰⁵ “συνηθειας ουσης τοις Ιουδαιοις δικαζεσθαι παρα μονω τω στρατηγω του στενου, ο κραταιος και αγιος ημων βασιλευς διωρισατο παρα παντος δικαστηριου κατα νομους τουτους δικαζεσθαι· και η συνηθεια ελογισθη ωσει ουδεν μη στηριχθαισα νομιμως” (G. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Συνταγμα των θειων και ιερων κανωνων*, I, [Athens 1852], *scholion* to *Nomocanon* 1,3, p. 41).

³⁰⁶ The texts of all three are edited in E. Patlagean, “Contribution juridique à l’histoire des Juifs dans la Méditerranée médiévale: les formules grecques de serment,” *REJ*, 124 (1965) : 137–56.

Book of the Prefect, a collection of regulations assembled in the City Prefect's Office circa 911–912 and revised about 965, and paragraph 36:14 in the *Ecloga ad Prochiron mutata* from southern Italy, dated to between the middle of the tenth and the middle of the twelfth centuries, transmit the text of “the oath that the Jews swear.”³⁰⁷

The third source, a legal record of a trial held in 1147, is particularly revealing, in that it details the actual legal mechanism by which the Jewish-oath was administered in ‘mixed’ cases and the considerable role it played in adjudicating such cases. The Christian plaintiff (a recent Jewish convert) sued the Jews of Attaleia for certain articles of property that he claimed as his own, and the presiding *praktor*—according to the plaintiff's deposition—“awarded us that our complaint should be settled by means of a *sukofantikon* oath (= *sacramentum calumniae causa*), and a *teleion* oath (= *sacramentum decisionis causa*); that while I, as a Christian, should take the *sukofantikon* they, on the other hand, should take a *teleion*, though not one they would wish, but one I shall give them in writing.”³⁰⁸ The Jews appeared to comply, but eventually refused to take the required oath after the plaintiff took his, “and coming with gifts before the *praktor* eluded the oath.”³⁰⁹ The plaintiff appealed, therefore, to the emperor, who ordered in a rescript that the case be transferred to a higher instance and that the Jews should be compelled to either take the oath as specified in the first instance (but using the much milder text quoted from the *Book of the Prefect*) or surrender the articles demanded, provided that the plaintiff had sworn indeed the *sukofantikon* oath.

Attestation of truthfulness was at the core of the Jewish oath; it was reinforced and supernaturally validated through symbolic gestures and verbal pronouncements. These gestures and pronouncements could be devised in a manner that would be acceptable to both Christians and Jews and respond to the special difficulties involved in ‘mixed’ cases, but the highly communicative nature of both gestures and pronouncements facilitated their evolution in conformity with the confrontational posture of the ruling religion, i.e. under the imprint of the

³⁰⁷ “ο ορκος ον ομνυουσιν οι Ιουδαιοι” (*JLSM* nos. [322], [344], pp. 151, 168–9, 171).

³⁰⁸ “Προσεταξεν ον ο πρακτωρ ημιν λυθηναι την υποθεσιν ημων δια συκοφαντικου και τελειου· και εγω μεν ως Χριστιανος ινα πληρωσω τον συκοφαντικον, αυτοι δε τον τελειον, πλην ουχ ως αυτοι θελουσιν, αλλ’ ως αν εγω δωσω αυτοις εγγραφως.” (*JLSM* no. [344], pp. 167–8).

³⁰⁹ “αλλα δωροις τον πρακτορα μετελθοντες εξεφυγον τον ορκον.” (*ibid.*, p. 168).

victorious Church humiliating the defeated Synagogue. The example of the Attaleia process illustrates another motivation that led in the same direction: the Christian side had all the interest to render the Jewish-oath taken by his adversary as odious and humiliating as to make its taking practically impossible, for failure to take it was tantamount to legally conceding the case. This double motivation induced the courts to allow the degradation of what was originally a reasonable means of truth-attestation into an increasingly vicious and self-defeating process of humiliation and exclusion, though any single example of the Jewish-oath still consisted of both strands—the practical and the exclusionist—in varying degrees of weight and intensity.

The gestures prescribed comprised the physical holding of the Bible (το μεγαλειον),³¹⁰ girding oneself with a bramble (a painful experience and a not too subtle allusion to the soteriological significance of the Burning Bush as well as the Crown of Thorns), being thrown into the sea, standing in the water up to one's neck, and striking the sea. The Attaleia text adds to the girding with bramble also lying down on a leather bag, going down into the sea, and spitting three times on one's circumcised penis. The actual formula of attestation may include a blessing of the Lord, and it always enumerates the Lord's great deeds, such as the Creation, giving the Law to Moses and the miracles performed through him, crossing the Red Sea, and feeding the people with heavenly bread. The actual swearing is followed by a list of Biblical punishments that the oath-taker submits to in advance as retribution for perjury: the leprosy of Gehazi, the sentence of Ely, the earth swallowing Dathan and Abeiron, and other Biblical maledictions. The formula in the *Book of the Prefect* is exceptional in that it does not acknowledge in advance punishments for perjury.

The question of the special fiscal liability of the Jews has been much discussed.³¹¹ The relevant documentation permits some reasonably reliable conclusions on that fiscality under the Early Empire, but it is too limited and anecdotal to allow for more than broad generalities in regard to the Middle and Late Empire. Throughout its history, nevertheless, it comprised two major types: poll-tax and collective taxation, and the main difference between the earliest and the later

³¹⁰ Meaning, usually, the Gospels, but in the present context it probably refers to the Old Testament.

³¹¹ See Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 183–99; Bowman, *The Jews*, 41–8.

periods consists in the mode of raising them: regular taxes sanctioned by specific laws under the Early Empire as against arbitrary, sporadic taxes lacking specific legal anchorage in the later Empire.

The special Jewish poll-tax originated as early as the first century, under Vespasian, and the last positive reference to a regular Jewish poll-tax dates from the mid-seventh century (the register of 40,000 taxable Jews handed to Omar when he occupied Alexandria in 643). Later sources, though largely anecdotal and inconclusive, suggest that the imperial government persisted in imposing a special poll-tax on Jews. Our (few) sources usually make no clear distinction between the poll-tax and the collective tax in their references to the special Jewish taxation: when the *Theophanes continuatus* reports that the despicable Michael II “declared the Jews exempt and free of tributes”³¹² this could apply to either of these two types of taxation or to both, just as a letter of Andronicus II from 1319/1320 states rather ambiguously that the Jews “pay the Empire what they are ordered [to pay],”³¹³ and Gregorios of Nicaea cites as one of the specific marks of infamy that distinguish the Jew that “[he is laden] with heavy taxes” and reports that the Jew was promised to be freed, on conversion, “from both the heavy taxes and such fiscal charges that oppressed him abusively until now.”³¹⁴ It is reasonable to assume, all the same, that when the authorities enticed Jews to convert by offering them tax-exemption (the subject of the above-quoted passages from Gregorios) they referred to the special Jewish poll-tax, for the personal choice involved suggests a personal exemption, and, anyhow, an exemption from a communal tax would have been of no value at all to a convert once he had abandoned his former community. This was probably the sense of the report—again in the *Theophanes continuatus*—that Basil I promised the converted Jews that he would “free [them] from the burden of their former tributes,”³¹⁵ a clear indication that the “former tributes” referred to are

³¹² “τους Ιουδαιους ανετους φορων και ελευτερους εδεικνυεν” (*Theophanes continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker [CSHB], Bonn 1838, cap. 8, p. 48). Georgios Cedrenos transmits this phrase almost verbatim: “τους Ιουδαιους ανετους φορων και ελευτερους επιθει” (*Historiarum Compendium*, t. II, ed. I. Bekker [CSHB], Bonn 1839, p. 73).

³¹³ “reddentes Imperio illud quod ordinatum est eis” (D. Jacoby, *Op. cit.*, p. 193).

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specific to the Jews rather than general taxes imposed on the population at large, on the one hand, and personal rather than communal, on the other hand.

The Jewish collective tax originated in the *Aurum Coronarium*, an internal tax raised by the Jewish communities under the *Patriarchs*. Following the cessation of the *Patriarchate* in the early fifth century it was maintained as a state tax, collected by the Jewish communal-synagogal office holders and paid to the state treasury. Its later history, however, is uncertain. The evidence at our disposal is overwhelmingly legal, with fairly limited corroborating evidence of administrative or historiographical nature. The constitutive law of the *Aurum Coronarium* as a state tax from 429 was received into Justinian's *Code*,³¹⁶ and subsequently—in two independent Greek translations/abridgements of the Latin source—into three canon-law sources: the *Collectio Tripartita*,³¹⁷ the *Nomocanon in XIV Titles* (Fourth Recension)³¹⁸ and its *Auctaria*.³¹⁹ It was omitted, however, from all the other imperial legal sources, mainly the *Basilica* with its dependent literature. Yet we possess significant evidence of a communal tribute imposed on the community of Thessalonica in an eleventh-century Geniza letter concerning a “fine” of about 1000 hyperpera,³²⁰ and in a petition of the community, dated 1425, to reduce the annual payment of that amount of 1000 hyperpera. The Venetian Signoria—in possession of the city at that time—acceded to the request and reduced that amount, under certain conditions, to 800 hyperpera.³²¹ This evidence about communal taxation in Thessalonica might be entirely unconnected with the *Aurum Coronarium*, it might even bear on two unrelated occurrences in the eleventh and in the fourteenth/fifteenth centuries, and

³¹⁶ *CJ.* 1:9:17 (*JRIL* no. 53, p. 322).

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³¹⁸ “και οτι τον στεφανητικον κανονα οι εξαρχοι αυτων ιδιοκινδυνως εισαγουσι ταις λαργιτιοσι.” (Fourth Recension, 12:2, ο νομος, *JLSM*, no. [158], p. 80). The text clearly derives from *Coll. Trip.* 1:1:17.

³¹⁹ “Τον υπερ του βασιλικου στεφανου εκ των Ιουδαιων συμπαρεχομενον κανονα οι πρωτοι αυτων οικειω μεθοδευετωσαν κινδυνω κατα των παλαιων πατριαρχων τυπον.” (*ibid.*, *Auctaria*, *JLSM*, no. [171], p. 84). This translation was made directly from *CJ.* 1:9:17 and is independent of the previous two texts.

³²⁰ J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, Vol. I, (New York, 1972), 50.

³²¹ Bowman, *Op. cit.* 46–7, 306.

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³²⁰ J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, Vol. I, (New York, 1972), 50.

³²¹ Bowman, *Op. cit.* 46–7, 306.

the equivalence of the payment demanded (1000 hyperpera) turn out to be a pure coincidence—but it does demonstrate the imposition of collective communal taxation on the Jews as a normal fiscal practice.

The role of the Jewry-law system in the abusive segregation of the Byzantine Jews can best be illustrated by the description of their status that Gregorios of Nicaea penned in 878/9. Arguing against the policy of enticing the Jews to convert through material advantages, he portrayed the Jew as one “immersed in tannery, dog-dung and filth of all sorts, never dares to look a Christian straight in the eyes, laden with heavy taxes and all the abusive fiscal charges and lacks the very necessities [of life].”³²² Yet that Jew was solemnly promised by the imperial government that on his conversion he would not only be given money, but also “be freed henceforth from his evil-smelling profession and from both the heavy taxes and such fiscal charges that have oppressed him abusively until now, be placed in a position to rule over true Christians, live an indolent and effortless life while being supplied with all the necessities of life, achieve high office undreamt-of [before] and marry a well-born wife of the land.”³²³ This glowing pipe-dream represents the reverse side of the actual condition of the potential Jewish convert—socio-economic exclusion and degradation, fiscal oppression, and a discriminatory status achieved through Jewry-law measures encompassing political and governmental incapacity as well as social exclusion through the ban on mixed marriages between Christians and Jews. The same picture of a policy combining arbitrary fiscal measures with socio-political discrimination was painted in the *Theophanes continuatus*: Michael II was as arbitrary in liberating the Jews from their fiscal burden—for he loved them no less than he abhorred and oppressed the Christians—just as Basil I used his arbitrary powers to promise the converted Jews that he would endow them

³²² “βυρσοδεψων τε και κυνεια κοπρω και βρωμων παντοδαπω συμφυρομενος και Χριστιανοις μεν μηδ’ αντοφθαλμων, δημοσιακοις δε βαρεσιν υποκειμενος και ταις επηρεασταις εκκειμενος απασι, και των αναγκαιων αυτων σπανιζομενος” (Dagron, *ibid.*).

³²³ “και χρηματισθειη μεν εκ πρωτης, δεξαιτο δε πληροφοριαν ως απαλλαγειη λοιπον του δυσωδου επιτηδευματος και των δημοσιακων βαρων και των οσοι μεχρι νυν επηρεαζον, και καταστατη μεν επικρατης των αυτο τουτο Χριστιανων, ζων δε βιον αργον και απονον εξει παρω ολην εαυτου την ζωην χορηγουμενα τα χρειωδη, και αξιοματων αν ουδ’ οναρ ειδεν επιβησεται, και των επι του τοπου την ευ γεγονυια εις γαμουσ ληψεται.” (*ibid.*).

with high rank, release them from the burden of their former tributes and convert them from “ατιμοι” into “επιτιμοι”, from ‘dishonorable’ into ‘honorable,’ a promise resonating with the original perception of ‘honor’ as synonymous to possession of full civic rights and privileges.³²⁴ The other face of Jewry-law was defined, however, by Leo VI: “These laws, which deal with the organization of their life, order that they read the Divine Scriptures, that they should not be hindered from their proper customs, even that their children should be recognized as their own by blood relationship as well as by kinship of circumcision.”³²⁵ Byzantine Jewry-law was, manifestly, a highly ambivalent system. A large measure of ambivalence characterized, consequently, the legal condition of the Jews in the Byzantine Empire throughout the millennium under discussion, with a steadily growing predominance, though, of its assimilative/exclusionist constituents over the latitudinarian elements, consequent on the progressive Christianization of the Empire and the corresponding decline of its Roman heritage.

³²⁴ “προσθεις δε και αξιοματων τοις προσερχομενοις διανομας και του βαρους των προτερων απαλλαξας φορων και επιτιμους εξ ατιμων ποιειν.” (Op. cit., cap. 95, p. 341).

³²⁵ See note 147 above.

THE JEWS IN THE BYZANTINE ECONOMY (SEVENTH TO MID-FIFTEENTH CENTURY)

David Jacoby

Byzantium experienced repeated changes in its boundaries from the early Arab conquests in the first half of the seventh to its fall to the Ottomans around the mid-fifteenth century. Within that long period various Romaniote, Greek-speaking Jewish communities of the Empire were either temporarily or permanently placed under foreign rule. The latter was the case with numerous communities in the thirteenth century, when the Empire suffered extensive territorial losses to Western or Latin forces in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade. This period also witnessed several economic developments that deeply affected Byzantium and its former territories, both in the short and in the long term. There was nevertheless a large degree of continuity in the economic interaction between the Byzantine and Latin regions.¹ It is indispensable, therefore, to take into account the economic activities of the Jews residing in these regions, regardless of whether their communities remained within the Empire or were subjected to foreign domination, in order to gain a long-term perspective of Jewish involvement in the Byzantine economy.²

The geographic range of this investigation exceeds the shifting boundaries of Byzantium for yet another reason, namely, the paucity and nature of the evidence illustrating Jewish economic activities. The sources covering the period extending to the thirteenth century, which include a small number of Geniza documents, are rather scarce and scattered over space and time, yet yield invaluable information once they are inserted within a broader context. The documentation bearing upon the following period, especially charters drafted by western notaries, is far more abundant for specific locations, trade routes and

¹ These developments and their impact are examined below.

² Various aspects of the Byzantine economy have recently been surveyed in *The Economic History of Byzantium, From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. Laiou (Washington, D.C. 2002) (hereafter: *EHB*). Jews are mentioned only sparsely.

periods, yet deficient for others.³ Provided anachronistic transpositions are avoided, the occasional recourse to late sources proves helpful in the reconstruction of Jewish participation in the Byzantine economy of earlier centuries. This recourse also enables an evaluation of the extent to which Jewish involvement in specific sectors of that economy continued over time.

Jews were present in Byzantine and former Byzantine territories throughout the eight centuries examined in this study. The extant sources enable only a partial reconstruction of Jewish settlement and of its extensive geographic distribution in these regions. Most Jews resided in cities situated along the main waterways of the eastern Mediterranean and major land routes, namely the Via Appia crossing southern Italy, the via Egnatia running through the Balkans, and the commercial itineraries of Asia Minor, as well as in political and administrative centers. Settlement continuity over several centuries is documented for Constantinople, Thessalonica, Thebes, Euripos/Negropont (modern Chalkis) in the island of Euboea, and Chandax/Candia (modern Iraklion) in Crete, yet can be ascertained for few other localities. Evolving political, economic and local conditions and the high degree of Jewish mobility within the Empire and across its political boundaries affected the composition, size, and economic profile of individual Jewish communities. These factors also account for the creation of additional ones in new political centers and in cities enjoying swift economic growth. The constant flow of Jewish migration between Byzantium and Islamic countries, especially Egypt, contributed its share to business relations between these regions.⁴ The Jews suffered from legal, administrative, and fiscal discrimination and various restrictions, both in the Empire and in the territories occupied by the Latins. They were nevertheless considered free, unless enslaved

³ For instance, the sources illustrating the continuity of Jewish settlement in Thessalonica from the 1180s to the mid-fifteenth century fail to yield any indication about economic activities besides the copy of Hebrew manuscripts: see D. Jacoby, "Foreigners and the Urban Economy in Thessalonike, c. 1150–c. 1430," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57 (2003), 123–9.

⁴ The complex topic of Jewish settlement and mobility in Byzantium is beyond the range of the present study. On some of its aspects, see D. Jacoby, "The Jewish Communities of the Byzantine World from the Tenth to the Mid-Fifteenth Century: Some Aspects of their Evolution," in *Jewish Reception of Greek Bible Versions. Studies in their Use in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Text and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism 23), eds. N. de Lange, J. Krivoruchko and C. Boyd-Taylor (Tübingen, 2009), 157–81.

as a result of war or piracy. As a result, they could freely engage in economic pursuits of their choice and there were no limitations on their freedom of movement, two important factors affecting the variety and geographic range of their economic activities.⁵

These primarily took place in cities or in relation to them, even when connected to rural property or occupations, which will soon be examined. A fairly large number of activities generated financial transactions, a flow of cash, and an exchange of services within the self-contained system of the local Jewish community. They included public functions such as education, charity, the operation of the synagogue, internal administration, and rabbinical justice, in addition to private liturgical functions, the ritual slaughtering of domestic animals, the copying of Hebrew manuscripts, as well as the renting and sale of communal and private premises situated within the Jewish neighborhood.⁶ Other Jewish economic activities were carried out within two separate, yet interconnected systems, namely, an internal Jewish network, specific to the communities, and the broad general economic network supplying all markets, regardless of their nature. The internal network, exclusively geared toward Jewish customers, was a projection of the distinctive corporate Jewish identity and an indispensable factor in the latter's preservation. It handled the slaughter of domestic animals for meat consumption and exercised constant supervision over the production, transportation, and distribution of wine and dairy products. These operations, governed by Jewish religious precepts, were carried out under particular conditions differing from those customary in Christian and Muslim societies. Jewish seasonal workers were sent to production sites, cheese molds were stamped, and the goods were escorted to the city to ensure their suitability for Jewish

⁵ On discrimination and legal status, see D. Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance: une communauté marginalisée," in *Hoi perithoriakoi sto Byzantio* (= *Marginality in Byzantium*), ed. C. Maltezos (Goulandri-Horn Foundation) (Athens 1993), 129–134, reprinted in D. Jacoby, *Byzantium, Latin Romania and the Mediterranean* (Aldershot, 2001), no. III; idem, "Venice and the Venetian Jews in the Eastern Mediterranean," in *Gli Ebrei e Venezia, secoli XIV–XVIII*, ed. G. Cozzi (Milano, 1987), 34–41, reprinted in D. Jacoby, *Studies on the Crusader States and on Venetian Expansion* (Northampton, 1989), no. X.

⁶ I am not dealing here with the economic functions of rabbis, teachers, other communal and ritual officers, scribes, or with those of physicians, pharmacists, and lawyers. These functions were often combined with trade and money-lending, activities examined in this study. A physician attested in 1137 offers a case in point: see below, 228. Shopkeepers, servants and seasonal workers have also been left out.

consumption. These practices, attested for Venetian Crete, must have also been applied in the Byzantine Empire.⁷ Incidentally, kosher commodities were clearly more expensive than others, as a result of the added cost of supervision and a less competitive market.⁸

Since most Jews were urban residents, they heavily depended upon farmers for the supply of wine, milk, butter, cheese, and domestic animals. Wine was essential for the performance of various Jewish ritual functions and therefore in constant demand, and yet was also enjoyed as a beverage. Cheese was the staple protein food of the poor, who only rarely could afford meat, if at all. It was also an important component of the daily diet of the middle and upper ranks of society, high-grade cheese being considered a delicacy.⁹ We have no evidence regarding the local Jewish chains of supply handling these commodities in Byzantium, whether before or after the Fourth Crusade. This is the case, for instance, with respect to the slaughter of domestic animals and the marketing of meat in Constantinople, although the state-controlled meat supply of the city was highly organized and is well documented.¹⁰ The operation of the internal Jewish supply system in the Empire may nevertheless be partly reconstructed with the help of sources and circumstantial evidence bearing on Crete from the early thirteenth century onward, when the island was ruled by Venice. The Jewish communal regulations issued in 1228 and later in the island's capital Candia, known as *Taqanot Qandya* as well as Venetian documents offer rich information regarding the production and supply of kosher wine, dairy products, and meat.¹¹

⁷ David Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean: Economic Activities from the Thirteenth to the Mid-Fifteenth Century," in *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der mittelalterlichen Juden: Fragen und Einschätzungen*, eds. M. Toch and E. Müller-Luckner (München, 2008), 26–8.

⁸ This is revealed by wine prices: see *ibid.*, 47.

⁹ On cheese in nutrition and the varieties produced in Crete, see D. Jacoby, "Cretan Cheese: A Neglected Aspect of Venetian Medieval Trade," in *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, eds. E. Kittel and T. Madden (Urbana, 1999), 49–51, reprinted in D. Jacoby, *Commercial Exchange Across the Mediterranean: Byzantium, the Crusader Levant, Egypt and Italy* (Aldershot, 2005), no. VIII.

¹⁰ See O. Schmitt, "Zur Fleischversorgung Konstantinopels," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 54 (2004): 135–57.

¹¹ The Jewish regulations are recorded in Elias S. Artom et Humbertus M.D. Cassuto, eds., *Taqanot Qandya ve-Zikhronoteha (Statuta Iudaeorum Candiae eorumque memorabilia)* (Jerusalem, 1943) (Hebrew), *passim*. For the Venetian documents, see below.

The demand for kosher commodities could be ensured in three different ways: complete dependence upon the mechanisms of the general economic system, yet under close Jewish supervision at all stages from production to consumption; reduced dependence linked to Jewish holding or owning of land and domestic animals, which enabled stricter control; finally, self-sufficiency at all stages. None of these alternatives was exclusive of the others, and the three clearly cohabited in Byzantium and former Byzantine territories. The first alternative does not require any elaboration regarding the supply of pastoral and agricultural goods. The two others involved the existence of Jewish rural settlements or the holding of means of production.

The evidence regarding Jewish rural settlements in Byzantium and the Latin-occupied territories has been largely overlooked so far. It is rather meager, yet nevertheless significant. According to the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* at some time in the second half of the ninth century Jews residing in villages, clearly farmers, traveled in their wagons to spend the Sabbath in Venosa, a city of Byzantine Basilicata, Italy.¹² Isaac, brother of Emperor John II Komnenos, provided that a Jewish married couple who had converted to Christianity before 1152 were to receive annual grants from the Kosmosoteira monastery founded on his estate near Bera in Thrace. The grants included grain and wine, which suggests that the couple was living close to the monastery in the countryside.¹³ It is not impossible, therefore, that they engaged in rural work and had belonged to a Jewish rural community before their conversion. Presumably in the second half of 1161 Benjamin of Tudela noted a community of two hundred Jews in Krisa, a small port on the northern shore of the Gulf of Corinth in the vicinity of Delphoi, whose members "sow and reap on their own plots and lands."¹⁴

¹² B. Klar, ed., *Megillat Ahima'az* (= *The Chronicle of Ahima'az*) (Jerusalem, 1974), 16 (Hebrew). See also J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641-1204* (Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechische Philologie, 30) (Athens, 1939), 28.

¹³ J. Thomas and A. Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 35) (Washington, D. C. 2000), II, 782, for the date of the foundation, and for the grant, 791 and 840, par. 93.

¹⁴ M. N. Adler, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Critical Text, Translation and Commentary* (London, 1907), 12 (Hebrew), 10 (English tr.) (hereafter: *BT*). For the dating of Benjamin's sojourn in Byzantium, see D. Jacoby, "Benjamin of Tudela and his 'Book of Travels,'" in *Venezia incrocio di culture. Percezioni di viaggiatori europei e non europei a confronto. Atti del convegno Venezia, 26-27 gennaio 2006* (Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani, Ricerche, 4), eds. K. Herbers e F. Schmieder (Roma, 2008), 145-7. For the location of Krisa, see J. Koder und F. Hild, *Hellas und Thessalien*

Benjamin, who visited Mytilene in the first half of 1163, reported that the Jews of the island were scattered in ten sites, most of them obviously villages.¹⁵ Archbishop Eustathios of Thessalonica refers to a Jewish rural community in the vicinity of Thessalonica when reporting the siege of the city by the forces of the Kingdom of Sicily in 1185.¹⁶ In 1204 a Jewish bill of divorce was drawn up in the village of Gortzanos adjacent to Dyrrachion (modern Durazzo).¹⁷ Hillel ben Eliakim, who apparently resided in Selymbria (modern Silivri), Thrace, considered in his commentaries on *Sifre* and *Sifra*, the latter completed in 1212, the care and pruning of orchards and several other agricultural issues.¹⁸ In 1352 a Jew was living with his family in the Cretan village of Pala,¹⁹ yet there is no evidence of Jewish villages in Venetian Crete, which is well-documented. Jewish herdsmen owning sheep and goats in the vicinity of Modon in the southwestern Peloponnesus are attested in 1483, yet this was clearly not a new phenomenon.²⁰ It stands to reason

(*Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, 1 = Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 125) (Wien, 1976), 195.

¹⁵ *BT*, 17(Hebrew), 14 (tr.). For the dating, see Jacoby, "Benjamin of Tudela," 146.

¹⁶ Eustazio di Tessalonica, *La espugnazione di Tessalonica*, ed. Stilpon Kyriakidis (Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neellenici, Testi, 5) (Palermo, 1961), 124, ll. 25–6, text reproduced with same pagination in Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, with English tr. by J. Melville-Jones (Byzantina Australiensia, 8) (Canberra, 1988).

¹⁷ According to a *responsum* of Isaiah of Trani: A. Wertheimer, ed., *Tesuvot Harid. The Responsa of Rabbi Isaiah the Elder of Terrani (sic), Italy (13th cent.)* (Jerusalem, 1967), col. 123, no. 23 (Hebrew); tr. Steven B. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium, 1204–1453* (Alabama, 1985), 217, no. 13, and dating by Heinrich Gross, "Jesaja b. Mali da Trani," *Zeitschrift für hebräische Bibliographie* 13 (1909): 51.

¹⁸ Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 62–3, 117, and 218, no. 15. A different case is envisaged by the Karaite scholar Yehuda ben Eliyahu Hadassi, a resident of Constantinople around the mid-twelfth century. In his *Eshkol Ha-Kofer* he refers to fig and other fruit trees growing in the courtyard of a house, thus in small numbers: Z. Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium: The Formative Years, 970–1100* (New York, 1957), 181, n. 47. With respect to the dating of *Eshkol Ha-Kofer*, Ankori, *ibid.*, 128, refers to a visit of Oriental Karaites in Constantinople in the mid-twelfth century, and *ibid.*, 442, he dates the work to the second half of the twelfth century while referring to S. Poznanski, *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon* (London, 1908), 68, who ascribes it to 1148.

¹⁹ A. Lombardo, ed., *Zaccaria de Fredo, notaio in Candia (1352–1357)* (Fonti per la storia di Venezia, Sez. III—Archivi notarili) (Venezia, 1968), 34, no. 43.

²⁰ C. Sathas, *Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1890–1900), IV, 127.

that the agricultural and pastoral activities of these Jews were not limited to self-supply and were at least partly market-oriented.²¹

Some toponyms suggest Jewish rural activity in additional localities. It is noteworthy that a peninsula on the northern coast of Mytilene was called Hebraiokastro, Obreakaspro, or Obriokastro, which seems to confirm Benjamin of Tudela's statement regarding Jewish presence in the rural areas of the island, mentioned above.²² Similar place names appear in other regions, namely, Ebropouloi east of Kerkyra on the island of Corfu, Breokastro, Breokastron and Hebraika on the island of Andros, Breokastro on Tinos,²³ Briokastro and Briokastron at two different places on Lemnos,²⁴ Briokastron or Ebraiokastron on Thasos, attested in 1394,²⁵ and Briokastro in Attica.²⁶ The derivation of the first component of these names from Greek Ebraios or 'Jew' would imply the existence of villages exclusively inhabited by Jews or with a decisive Jewish majority. Some doubts have been raised on philological grounds regarding that derivation, yet the arguments are not convincing. It has also been stressed that several of these place names only survive in folk traditions, are applied to presently uninhabited or ruined sites, and are not attested in medieval documentation, except for Thasos.²⁷ The negative approach to the 'Jewish' connection of the names has also been nurtured by the common, yet mistaken assumption that there were no Jewish farmers, or hardly any in the Empire and former Byzantine territories. However, the existence of Hebraiokastro on Mytilene, which matches Benjamin of Tudela's statement regarding

²¹ A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London, 1971), 114–6, and E. Malamut, *Les îles de l'Empire byzantin, VII^e–XII^e siècles* (Byzantina Sorbonensia, 8) (Paris, 1988), I, 168, 170, contend respectively that all the Jews settled on the island of Chios in the eleventh century or some of them were farmers. N. Oikonomides, "The Jews of Chios (1049): A Group of *Excusati*," in *Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean. Studies in Honour of David Jacoby*, ed. Benjamin Arbel (London, 1996) = *Mediterranean Historical Review* 10/1–2 (1995): 218–225, envisages that some Jews rented rural properties from the Nea Moni monastery. However, since these Jews only paid a head tax, it is unlikely that they were peasants: see Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," 128–9.

²² For the location, see J. Koder, *Aigaion Pelagos (Die nördliche Ägäis)* (Tabula Imperii Byzantini, 10 = Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 259) (Wien, 1998), 294, s. v. H. Theodoroi.

²³ Malamut, *Les îles de l'Empire byzantin*, I, 183, 210–1, 213.

²⁴ Koder, *Aigaion Pelagos*, 198, 199, 264.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 173, 220, 222.

²⁶ Koder und Hild, *Hellas*, 222.

²⁷ Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 63–5, and 294–5, no. 104.

the Jews of the island, and renders the presence of small Jewish communities in the sites mentioned above quite plausible. The absence of chronological clues, except for Thasos, prevents their dating, yet the period following the Fourth Crusade is the most likely one for reasons explained below.

Jewish farmers should be distinguished from Jews who owned or held land like other urban residents, without necessarily pursuing themselves agricultural or pastoral activities. In the early tenth century the wealthy Amittai II had a vineyard in Apulia near Oria.²⁸ In 1033 a Jew bought two adjacent vineyards in the region of Taranto and in 1039 an additional, adjacent one to the others from the same Christian owner.²⁹ This does not necessarily imply that he personally participated in the growing of grapes and the production of wine. Karaite authors discussed the employment of workers on Jewish land. Jacob ben Reuben envisaged in his *Sefer Ha-Osher*, presumably composed in Constantinople in the second half of the eleventh or rather the first half of the twelfth century, Karaite handymen harvesting grapes or looking after domestic animals and sheep.³⁰ Around the mid-twelfth century the Karaite Yehuda ben Eliyahu Hadassi, a resident of Constantinople, mentioned in his *Eshkol Ha-Kofer* Christian sharecroppers working in Jewish fields and vineyards.³¹ At that time there were vineyards in sparsely built-up areas within the urban walls of the city and in its vicinity.³² In the second or third decade of the thirteenth century a Jew presumably residing in Kastoria, western Macedonia, owned a vineyard in nearby Vrastiana. It was claimed by his son, a convert to Christianity, in the court of Demetrios Chomatianos, who served as archbishop of Ohrid from 1216/17 to ca. 1236.³³ David

²⁸ Klar, *Megillat Ahima'az*, 29.

²⁹ F. Trinchera, ed., *Syllabus Graecarum Membranarum* (Napoli 1865), 29–31, no. 26, and 36–8, no. 31; tr. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 194, nos. 137–8.

³⁰ Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, 180 and citation in n. 44. For the approximate dating of *Sefer Ha-Osher*, see *ibid.*, 196–197 and n. 103, 442. Poznanski, *The Karaite Literary Opponents*, 66–7, ascribed the work to the first half of the twelfth century.

³¹ Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, 180 and citation in n. 41. For the dating of the work, see above, n. 18.

³² See D. Jacoby, "Mediterranean Food and Wine for Constantinople: The Long-Distance Trade, Eleventh to Mid-Fifteenth Century," in *Commodities and Traffic Routes: Aspects of Supply and Accommodation in the Eastern Mediterranean (4th to 15th Centuries)*, eds. E. Kislinger, J. Koder, A. Kuelzer, (Wien, 2010), 138 and n. 85.

³³ J. Pitra, ed., *Analecta sacra et classica* (Roma, 1891), VI, cols. 377–82, no. 85. For the approximate dating, see *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kazhdan (New York, 1991), I, 426, s. v. Chomatianos, Demetrios.

Kalomiti, a resident of Negropont, the main city of Euboea, had fields and vineyards in the island in the 1260s.³⁴ In Venetian Crete, Euboea and Genoese Chios various credit operations resulted in the transfer of rural land and dependent peasants to Jews, whether temporarily as security for loans, or permanently following their acquisition from insolvent debtors. In 1423 Venice, alarmed by the large-scale Jewish acquisitions of property outside the Jewish quarters in its overseas territories, ordered the Jews to relinquish them within two years. Jews nevertheless continued to obtain, rent, or buy rural land.³⁵ In 1398 the Jewess Ihera Melicha of Chios owned fruit-gardens and vineyards in a suburb and around the city.³⁶ For many years prior to 1436 Salomon son of Abraham, a resident of Patras in the northwestern Peloponnesus, leased land turned into a garden or rather an orchard in the city's vicinity.³⁷

The information regarding rural sites inhabited, owned, or rented by Jews is sporadic. Moreover, since no rural location is documented more than once it is impossible to determine how long it was exploited by Jews, whether directly or indirectly. Not surprisingly, Jewish rural settlements and Jews engaging in agricultural and pastoral activities are not documented to the same extent as urban communities. Still, they were presumably more numerous than it would seem at first glance, since the evidence assembled here relates to regions distant one from another, to different periods, and illustrates the continuity of the phenomenon. Jews must have been eager to obtain rural land yielding revenue yet more importantly, enabling close supervision over the production of kosher wine and edibles. One may wonder whether the reference of Benjamin of Tudela to sowing in Krisa is accurate, since it would imply grain growing, or merely a reference to agricultural activities couched in biblical terms. The growing of grain on Jewish land is attested by the references of twelfth-century Karaite authors to fields,

³⁴ According to an anonymous and undated Hebrew letter sent from Negropont to Rome, ed. C. Bernheimer, "Document relatif aux Juifs de Négrepont," *Revue des Études Juives* 65 (1913), 224–8, esp. 224–5; tr. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 234–40, no. 30. I shall justify my dating in a forthcoming study.

³⁵ See Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 45–6.

³⁶ D. Gioffrè, "Atti rogati in Chio nella seconda metà del XIV secolo," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 34 (1962): 379–81.

³⁷ E. Gerland, *Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des lateinischen Erzbistums Patras* (Leipzig, 1903), 218–20, no. 19; tr. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 309–10, no. 130.

sharecroppers, and mills.³⁸ In any event, the planting or acquisition of vineyards must have been considered a priority. Single or small vineyards were exploited for private consumption, while the accumulation of vineyards, as in Kastoria, was clearly aimed at market supply.

However, it is rather unlikely that the Jewish rural sector ever covered all the demand for kosher commodities of any community in the Empire or in former Byzantine territories after the seventh century. As a result, the internal Jewish supply network was never self-sufficient, entirely independent, or disjoined from the general economic network. Since it could not fulfill the required functions at all the stages leading from production to consumption, it heavily relied on external supplies of labor and produce. In many areas the growing of grapes, their harvest, and the actual production of wine, milking and the production of butter and cheese, the growing of animals for slaughter, as well as the transfer of these commodities to Jewish markets and consumers were largely, if not entirely performed by Christians. This is illustrated, for instance, by a Jewish physician from Egypt settled in Byzantine Seleucia, southern Asia Minor, who in 1137 had in store four hundred barrels of wine prepared according to rabbinical precepts, much of which was presumably intended for export.³⁹ Since he failed to mention vineyards among his possessions, it is clear that the wine had been produced by Christians under Jewish supervision. As attested in 1320, Venetian merchants went from Constantinople to the countryside at the time of the grape gathering to buy must, unfermented grape juice, from peasants.⁴⁰ There is good reason to believe that some Jews of Constantinople acted likewise to ensure their basic supply of kosher wine.⁴¹

³⁸ Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, 179–80 and citations in n. 41–3, see above, 226.

³⁹ Ed. and Hebrew tr. by S. D. Goitein, "A Letter of Historical Importance from Seleucia (Selefke), Cilicia, dated 21 July 1137," *Tarbiz* 27 (1958): 528–35 (Hebrew); English tr. and commentary by idem, "A Letter from Seleucia (Cilicia), Dated 21 July 1137," *Speculum* 39 (1964): 298–303, esp. 299–300. Medical practice alone cannot explain the wealth of this physician, on which see D. Jacoby, "What Do We Learn about Byzantine Asia Minor from the Documents of the Cairo Genizah?," in *He Byzantine Mikra Asia (60s–120s ai.) (= Byzantine Asia Minor (6th–12th cent.))* (Institute for Byzantine Research, National Hellenic Foundation) (Athens, 1998), 94–5, reprinted in Jacoby, *Byzantium*, no. I.

⁴⁰ G. Thomas, ed., *Diplomatarium veneto-levantinum* (Venetiis 1880–1899), I, 164 lines 2–3 from below.

⁴¹ Kosher wine was also imported to Constantinople from more distant producers: see below.

The fairly abundant evidence for Venetian Crete enables a reconstruction of the internal Jewish supply network in the island, in the operations of which Jews occasionally participated beyond the exercise of supervision. The sources also reveal various aspects of its dependence upon the general supply system. One of these was the provision of Jewish credit to non-Jewish rural producers in return for the delivery of commodities at a fixed date or within a fixed period. The integration of the internal Jewish network within the broader production and trade patterns of the eastern Mediterranean was further promoted by three offshoots of the former: the sale of kosher surpluses not absorbed by the Jewish residents of Crete; the marketing of edibles and wine originally intended for Jewish consumption, yet rendered unfit for that purpose as a result of improper handling or supervision; and finally, the extension of Jewish business trips for the delivery of kosher wine and cheese to transactions in similar non-kosher products.⁴² It is likely that similar production and supply structures and credit operations existed in Byzantium to varying degrees, though not to the same extent as in Venetian Crete. By the twelfth century the use of sale credit was presumably fairly common in regions of the Empire familiar with Italian credit and business practices, yet rather limited in the less monetized rural economy of other regions. The flow of liquid capital and the use of credit increased in the following centuries.⁴³

As noted earlier, the Jews of Byzantium and Latin-occupied territories were free to engage in any occupation of their choice. They exercised a conspicuous activity in three economic branches, namely, tanning, dyeing, and the manufacturing of silk textiles and garments. The dyeing of hides and that of textiles involved different processes and different professional skills. Dyeing and tanning were widespread among the Jews of the eastern Mediterranean.⁴⁴ These occupations, especially the latter, were considered degrading because of the foul

⁴² See Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 31–2.

⁴³ On the Italian impact with respect to credit, see A. Laiou, "Byzantium and the Commercial Revolution," in *Europa medievale e mondo bizantino. Contatti effettivi e possibilità di studi comparati* (Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, Nuovi studi storici—40), eds. G. Arnaldi e G. Cavallo (Roma, 1997), 239–46, 252–3. On money circulation and monetization in Byzantium, see C. Morrisson, "Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation," in *EHB*, III: 946–62.

⁴⁴ S. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, (Berkeley, 1967–1993), I, 106–8, 111–2.

waters and the stench associated with the industrial processes, and their practitioners were located at the bottom of the social scale. However, there is no evidence to support the claim that tanning was imposed upon the Jews of Byzantium in order to display or enhance their social marginalization.⁴⁵ Various Byzantine authors nevertheless used tanning and dyeing as metaphors for Jews and the Jewish faith. In a polemical treatise composed around 878/879 Gregorios Asbestas, archbishop of Syracuse in Sicily and later in that office in Nicaea, Asia Minor, described the Jews as immersed in tannery and filth.⁴⁶ Around 1200 Michael Choniates, archbishop of Athens, also applied the metaphor to Jewish dyers,⁴⁷ while some time after 1296 the humanist Maximus Planoudes linked the Jewish faith to tanning in Constantinople.⁴⁸ The literary device used by these authors implies that Jewish tanners and dyers were a fairly common sight in the Empire.

This is indeed borne out by various sources. An undated Hebrew business letter ascribed on paleographic grounds to the tenth or eleventh century deals with the dispatch of hides to Crete and refers to Mytilene, which locates its author in the Aegean region. The letter is of particular interest since it contains a number of Greek technical terms in Hebrew characters related to the condition and processing of hides before tanning, and refers to a Jewish dyer.⁴⁹ In about 1150 Niketas, archbishop of Chonai in Asia Minor, expelled the Jews from his city, among them tanners and dyers.⁵⁰ Jewish tanning and dyeing are amply

⁴⁵ See Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," 133–4.

⁴⁶ G. Dagron, "Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée sur le baptême des Juifs," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991), 319, par. 3, and commentary *ibid.*, 318.

⁴⁷ S. Lampros, ed. *Michael Akominatou tou Choniatou ta Sozomena* (Athens, 1879–1880), I, 53. For the dating, see G. Stadtmüller, "Michael Choniates, Metropolit von Athen (ca. 1138–ca. 1222)," *Orientalia Christiana* 33/2, no. 91 (1934): 118.

⁴⁸ P. Leone, ed., *Maximi monachi Planudis epistulae* (Amsterdam, 1991), 62–5, no. 31. On Planoudes's reference to Jewish tanners in the Vlanga region, see also D. Jacoby, "Les quartiers juifs de Constantinople à l'époque byzantine," *Byzantion* 37 (1967): 191–3, reprinted in *idem, Société et démographie à Byzance et en Roumanie latine* (London, 1975), no. II. For additional evidence on the use of the metaphor by these and other authors, see Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," 142–3.

⁴⁹ N. de Lange, ed., *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Geniza* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum, herausgegeben von Martin Hengel und Peter Schäfer, 51) (Tübingen, 1996), 21–7, no. 4. For the technical terms, see my review of that book in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 91 (1998): 112. The editor's reading 'Kalomiti' (verso, l. 7), which I followed there, is rather doubtful according to Prof. M. Beit-Arié, Director of the Hebrew Palaeography Project, The National Library, Jerusalem (personal communication).

⁵⁰ See above, n. 43.

attested in Constantinople around that time. The Karaite Jacob ben Reuben discussed in his *Sefer Ha-Osher*, presumably composed in the city, the tanning and dyeing of skins of ritually unclean animals and strongly opposed the permissiveness displayed by Rabbanite Jews in that respect. Although Jacob ben Reuben relied on eleventh-century sources, he clearly referred to current practice.⁵¹ Around the mid-twelfth century the Karaite Yehuda ben Eliyahu Hadassi, a resident of Constantinople, listed in his *Eshkol Ha-Kofer* tanning and dyeing among the occupations prohibited on the Sabbath.⁵² Both Karaites and Rabbanites were thus involved in tanning and dyeing in the Byzantine capital. Benjamin of Tudela, who visited in 1161 or 1162 the Jewish neighborhood of Pera, the suburb of Constantinople located north of the Golden Horn, considered the tanners responsible for Greek animosity and the violence exercised toward the Jews in general, because they spilled in the streets the malodorous liquids deriving from the processing of hides. The blame he cast upon these craftsmen clearly reflects the social bias of the local Jewish elite composed of merchants toward a section of the community involved in the lowly occupation of tanning. However, in that period Byzantine anti-Semitism had more profound roots.⁵³

The Jewish neighborhood of Pera was gutted by fire in 1203, and most surviving Jews established themselves in Constantinople proper. Their resettlement in the region of Vlanga, along the city's southern shore, was achieved between 1261 and 1282 under Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos. Jewish tanners are documented in their midst around 1300. The neighboring harbor of Kontoskalion possibly served as a sewer for the foul waters of the tanning. The residence of all Byzantine Jews of Constantinople in that urban region suggests that the tanners were an important component among them.⁵⁴ Venetian entrepreneurs furthered tanning in Constantinople in the following decades. They

⁵¹ Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, 177 and citation in n. 30. On the dating of the work, see above n. 30. Note that in 1436 Elia Dedimari, a Jewish resident of Constantinople, kept in his warehouse 300 salted hides of castrated horses, ritually unclean animals: U. Dorini e T. Bertelè, eds., *Il libro dei conti di Giacomo Badoer (Costantinopoli, 1436-1440)* (Il Nuovo Ramusio III) (Roma, 1956), 394, ll. 2-3, 7-13, 17-21.

⁵² Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, 177 and n. 29.

⁵³ BT, 16-17 (Hebrew), 14 (tr.). On contemporary Byzantine anti-Semitism, see Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," 148-51.

⁵⁴ D. Jacoby, "The Jewish Community of Constantinople from the Komnenan to the Palaiologan Period," *Vizantijskij Vremennik* 55/2 (80) (1998): 37-40, reprinted in Jacoby, *Byzantium*, no. V.

imported from the Black Sea skins, which after being tanned were shipped to Venice with added value. In order to further reduce the cost of these hides, the Venetian authorities granted Venetian status to a number of Byzantine Jewish tanners. The Empire strongly opposed this policy from 1319 to 1324, since Venetian nationals enjoyed full exemption from imperial taxes in Byzantium, regardless of whether they were citizens, subjects of the Venetian colonies and outposts, or individuals granted Venetian protection. Since Jews only are mentioned in that context, it is clear that they were dominant in tanning in the region of Vlanga around that time. In 1324 or shortly afterwards, the Venetian Jews residing in that region were compelled to resettle in the Venetian quarter situated along the Golden Horn.⁵⁵ The Jewish neighborhood of Vlanga, inhabited by imperial subjects, survived until the Ottoman conquest of 1453, and tanning presumably continued to be practiced in its midst.⁵⁶ Jewish merchants handling skins and Jewish tanners are attested in Constantinople in 1438, yet we do not know where they resided or to which 'national' group they belonged.⁵⁷

Jewish tanners are also attested in additional ports of the eastern Mediterranean. The dispatch of hides to Crete in the tenth or eleventh century has already been mentioned.⁵⁸ Candia was presumably their destination. In that city the tanneries were situated outside the western city gates along the Bay of Dermata or 'Bay of Hides'. The Greek name of the bay obviously went back to the Byzantine period preceding the Venetian conquest of the city in 1207. The location of the Jewish quarter along the bay suggests both the continuous exercise of tanning by its residents from that period onward, and the important function of the craft within the local Jewish community. The continuity of local Jewish tanning is indirectly confirmed by an early Jewish communal ordinance issued in 1228. Still, there was no Jewish monopoly in tanning in Candia. Jewish butchers acted as middlemen between the owners of herds and tanners by selling the skins of ritually slaughtered animals to both Jewish and Christian craftsmen. Cretan Jews also par-

⁵⁵ Jacoby, "Les quartiers juifs," 191-4, 196-207.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 194-6.

⁵⁷ See Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 33-4.

⁵⁸ See above, 230.

ticipated in the import of skins from the Turkish emirates of Asia Minor, which were tanned in Crete, as in 1371.⁵⁹

Jewish trading in hides is further attested in Negropont in 1370.⁶⁰ Jewish tanners were also active in Coron and Modon, two ports of the southwestern Peloponnesus under Venetian rule from 1207 to 1500. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Venetian ordinances and several travelers refer to tanners among the Jews living in a suburb of Modon.⁶¹ In 1464 the Jewish tanners appear to have been the only ones in town.⁶² It is clear that the skins of sheep and goats owned by Jews in the vicinity of Modon in 1483 were also tanned there.⁶³ Ovadiah of Bertinoro mentions Jewish tanners in Rhodes, which he visited in 1487.⁶⁴ It is likely that, as elsewhere, Jews had been engaged in tanning in the island for a long time.

Silk textiles played an important symbolic role in the ceremonial of the Byzantine court and the Church, as well as in the Empire's political relations with foreign rulers, dignitaries, and cities. In addition, they served as status symbols in Byzantine society and in terms of value constituted the most important export commodity of Byzantium until the thirteenth century. Byzantine sources from the fourth to the sixth century seem to imply that Jews participated in the manufacture of silk fabrics, although it is not clear in what capacity, and that they excelled in the production of purple and red dyes. A documentary gap of several centuries after the early testimonies precludes any sweeping generalizations regarding the continuity or nature of that involvement. Moreover, the early sources are not relevant for Constantinople, for which Jewish participation in the production of silk fabrics appears only much later.

⁵⁹ Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 34. The ordinance of 1228 prohibited the soaking of skins in the water of the ritual bath, a rather surprising practice: *Taqanot Qandya*, 8, no. 15.

⁶⁰ S. Borsari, "Ricchi e poveri nelle comunità ebraiche di Candia e Negroponte (secc. XIII–XIV)," in *Plousioi kai ftchoi sten kononia tes ellenolatinikes Anatoles* (= *Ricchi e poveri nella società dell'Oriente grecolatino*), ed. C. Maltezou (Biblioteca dell'Istituto ellenico di Studi bizantini e postbizantini di Venezia 19) (Venezia, 1998), 211, n. 3.

⁶¹ Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 35; J. Starr, *Romania: The Jewries of the Levant after the Fourth Crusade* (Paris, 1949), 64, 66–7.

⁶² Sathas, *Documents*, IV, 33–4.

⁶³ See above, 224.

⁶⁴ A. Yaari, ed., *Letters from the Land of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Ramat-Gan, 1971), 111, and for the dating of his visit, *ibid.*, 110, n. 42 (Hebrew).

A hagiographic work composed around 640, the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, mentions the activity of a Jew who served as an agent of a Greek merchant of Constantinople. In 632 Jacob illicitly exported several silk garments from the city on behalf of his employer and sailed via Alexandria to the province Africa in order to sell them. He was in no way involved in the manufacture of silks.⁶⁵ An imperial edict of 992 barred Venetian ships leaving Constantinople from carrying Jews residing in Byzantine southern Italy or their goods. It reveals that Jewish merchants from that region regularly visited Constantinople and suggests that some of them participated in the export of silk textiles from the city.⁶⁶

Further information about the function of Jews in the silk sector of Constantinople appears in the early tenth century. The manufacture of silk textiles in the city was carried out at that time both in imperial and private workshops. The supply, channeling, and preparation of the raw material for the latter, the weaving workshops, and the marketing of their products were strictly controlled by the state. Those involved in these operations were organized in professional guilds, the regulations of which were sanctioned by the imperial government and included in the extant version of the 'Book of the Eparch' (*Eparchikon Biblion*), dated to 911/912. Some of these provisions appear to have already been implemented by the ninth century. Jews were barred from enlisting in the Constantinopolitan guilds, yet contrary to the assertion of some scholars there is no evidence of separate Jewish guilds. The Jewish silk weavers, degummers, spinners, dyers, and tailors did not exercise their respective crafts in the workshops of guild members. Rather, they executed on their own premises the work commissioned by guild members, entrepreneurs, or other private customers, as implied by twelfth-century evidence. As a result, they remained in a state of eco-

⁶⁵ *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, V, 20, in V. Déroche et G. Dagron, "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VIIe siècle," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991), 215–219, ed. by Déroche; commentary by Dagron *ibid.*, 230–46, and dating of the work, 246–7. For the dating of Jacob's journey, see D. Jacoby, "The Jews of Constantinople and their Demographic Hinterland," in *Constantinople and its Hinterland* (Papers from the Twenty-Seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Oxford, April 1993), ed. C. Mango and G. Dagron (Aldershot, 1995), 222 and n. 2, reprinted in Jacoby, *Byzantium*, no. IV.

⁶⁶ For the last two paragraphs, see D. Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry of Constantinople," in *ibid.*, *Byzantium*, no. XI, 2–3, 5–8. For the correct dating of the edict in 992, instead of 991, see M. Pozza—G. Ravegnani, eds., *I trattati con Bisanzio, 992–1198 (Pacta veneta, IV)* (Venezia, 1994), 21–2.

conomic dependency with respect to those employing them. This is also illustrated by a provision included in the 'Book of the Eparch' prohibiting the *metaxopratai* or silk merchants from selling silk or cocoons to Jews or to merchants.⁶⁷ While the provision was enacted to avert the export of these commodities from Constantinople, it prevented the Jews from direct access to the raw silk arriving in the city. The specific reference to Jews in that context implies that they had nevertheless acquired a share in its illicit export.⁶⁸

The rising volume and increasingly diversified demand for silks in Byzantium in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, enhanced by external demand somewhat later, generated three important developments: an expansion of manufacture, the establishment of new centers such as Thebes producing high-grade fabrics, and the marketing of a broader range of textiles. These included half-silks combining silk with linen or cotton and a low-grade silk fabric made of floss and waste silk known as *koukoulariko*.⁶⁹ Incidentally, in 1022 a Jewish bride from a modest household living in the city of Mastaura, Asia Minor, received from her mother a red garment made of *koukoulariko* silk, valued only 1 1/2 *nomisma* or gold coin.⁷⁰ A commentary attributed to the eleventh-century Rabbi Masliakh living in Sicily mentions the use of perforated wooden tablets in Byzantium in relation to silk.⁷¹ The commentary apparently alludes to tablet weaving, practiced for the production of narrow silk bands used as belts or as ornaments applied on

⁶⁷ J. Koder, ed. and tr., *Das Eparchenbuch des Leons des Weisen. Einführung, Edition, Übersetzung und Indices* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, XXXIII) (Wien, 1991), 100, chap. 6, par. 16.

⁶⁸ For this paragraph, see Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry of Constantinople," 3–5, 12–7.

⁶⁹ See D. Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84/85 (1991/1992): 452–500, reprinted in idem, *Trade, Commodities and Shipping in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Aldershot, 1997), no. VII. On half-silks and low-grade silks, see *ibid.*, 473–5, 496 and n. 254.

⁷⁰ de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 1–10, no. 1, esp. l. 30. On the nature of the cloth, see Jacoby, "What Do We Learn about Byzantine Asia Minor," 84–6.

⁷¹ Cited in an apparently garbled version by his pupil Nathan ben Rabbenu Yehiel, *Sefer Aruk Ha-Salem*, ed. Y. Y. Kohut (Vienna, 1926) (Hebrew), V, 148. Rabbi Nathan, who lived in Rome, further mentions the washing of silk on the tablet, which is clearly a gross misunderstanding. S. Krauss, *Studien zur byzantinisch-jüdischen Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1914), 74, n. 2, has suggested that the tablet was utilized for the unwinding of silk fibers from the cocoons, yet no such device was used for that operation.

garments. Luxurious brocaded and patterned bands were made of silk and gold or silver thread.⁷²

Highly skilled Jewish artisans appear to have continuously participated in the various stages of silk manufacture and in the production of silk garments from the eleventh century onward, if not earlier. The number of Jewish silk weavers and dyers presumably increased over time as a result of immigration from Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt.⁷³ Precious information about Jewish silk weavers and dyers in the Empire, especially in Constantinople, appears in the Karaite Bible commentaries of Jacob ben Reuben and Yehudah ben Elijah Hadassi. As noted earlier, their works reflect eleventh- and twelfth-century activities.⁷⁴ Jewish silk workers and dyers were clearly the sources of the information presented by the two authors. Both of them deal with the biblical prohibition to wear *sha'atnez*, a hybrid cloth combining fibers of animal and vegetal origin and therefore considered ritually impure.⁷⁵ The second author fully endorsed that prohibition, yet adopted a practical approach to the issue by stating that "the making and weaving and buying and selling [of the hybrid cloth] in order to earn [a living] is permitted." He clearly alluded to silk, as implied by references to silk worms and to the manufacture of silk fabrics elsewhere in his work. The discussion of *sha'atnez* was highly relevant to Byzantine silk manufacture, which as noted above included half-silks combining silk with linen or cotton. Moreover, it confirms that Jews were engaging in the manufacture and sale of these silks.

Jacob ben Reuben also offers indirect evidence about Jewish involvement in the dyeing of silk with the costly purple extracted from the murex mollusk. We do not know which colorants were used by a Jewish dyer, attested by a Geniza letter dated to ca. 1082–1094, who was entrusted with the dyeing of a precious silk fabric, apparently spoiled it, and was pressured to pay compensation to its owner. Incidentally,

⁷² To date this is the only known reference to tablet weaving in Byzantium. On the technique, see Sophie Desrosiers, *Soieries et autres textiles de l'Antiquité au XVI^e siècle. Musée National du Moyen Âge—Thermes de Cluny, Catalogue* (Paris, 2004), 476, fig. 4, and 485, s. v. "tissé aux cartons"; for references, see 506, s. v. "tissage," and for examples, 162–3, nos. 75–6.

⁷³ Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 485–6.

⁷⁴ See above nn. 18 and 30.

⁷⁵ On *sha'atnez*, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, XIV (Jerusalem, 1971), coll. 1213–4. The prohibition originally applied to a mixture of wool and linen, yet was later extended to other materials; see also Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 119–21.

the case illustrates a contractual relationship between an independent craftsman and a customer. Jews were also involved in silk embroidery, practiced on a large scale in Byzantium. Jabob ben Reuben refers to Jewish embroiderers executing Christian motifs, obviously on silks intended for liturgical use in lay or ecclesiastical surroundings.⁷⁶ Economic necessity compelled these artisans to carry out the work, despite their reservations about the iconographic content of the ornaments. Purely decorative embroidery did not raise such problems.⁷⁷

The silk weavers and tailors whom Benjamin of Tudela met in Constantinople in 1161 or 1162 exercised their craft in their own workshops, located in the Jewish neighborhood of Pera like the Jewish tanners. The silk workers manufactured textiles and garments for the imperial court, as suggested by Benjamin's information about the delivery of silks to the latter's warehouses. In addition, they produced goods commissioned by guild members, entrepreneurs, or other private customers. Yehudah ben Elijah Hadassi's statement quoted earlier suggests that they also sold their wares on the open market, apparently infringing upon the privileged production and marketing system of the silk guilds, which were still operating at that time.⁷⁸ It is possible, though, that the Karaite scholar referred to small half-silk pieces of clothing and bedding, in addition to table weaves, mainly manufactured by women who sold their products either directly to customers or to mercers. We may safely assume that the manufacture and sale of these silk goods was not regulated or supervised, in view of their small size and their quality.⁷⁹ Small pieces are attested later in several former Byzantine territories occupied by the Latins, as we shall see below. Some Jewish merchants and rich men Benjamin encountered in Pera

⁷⁶ For this paragraph and the preceding one, see Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry of Constantinople," 9–12, 16–7. On embroidered liturgical textiles in Byzantium, see W. Woodfin, "Liturgical Textiles," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. Evans, Exhibition catalogue (New Haven, 2004), 295–7.

⁷⁷ Benjamin of Tudela was impressed by the silk vestments worn by the rich men of Constantinople, which displayed "woven and embroidered designs": *BT*, 16 (Hebrew), 13 (tr.).

⁷⁸ For the statement, relevant for Constantinople where the author resided, see above, 226. On the guilds, see G. Maniatis, "The Domain of Private Guilds in the Byzantine Economy, Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001), 357.

⁷⁹ This was the case in Italy: see D. Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World and the Christian West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004), 207–8, 228.

may have acted as entrepreneurs or middlemen within the Jewish silk production and marketing network.

Benjamin's statement regarding the Jews of Thessalonica "engaged in the silk craft" is too general to warrant any conclusion regarding their specific skills. Yet it is in Thebes that he encountered the largest concentration of Jewish silk workers, "the best craftsmen in the land of the Greeks (= the Empire) at making silk and purple garments," the latter dyed with murex purple reserved for imperial garments. By the mid-twelfth century numerous Theban Jews, a community consisting of some two thousand individuals, were active in the various sectors of the silk branch.⁸⁰ It is likely that the first Jews engaging in silk manufacture in Thessalonica and Thebes came from Constantinople or other Byzantine sites. In 1147 an unknown number of them were deported by the forces of King Roger II of Sicily from Thebes to work in the royal silk workshop of Palermo. However, by the time Benjamin visited Thebes in 1161, the local silk industry had recovered, it would seem partly thanks to an influx of Jewish silk artisans from other Byzantine silk centers and possibly also from Egypt.⁸¹ Archeological finds in Thebes suggest the existence of dye workshops operating from the late eleventh to the early fourteenth century between the western edge of the city and the Dirke stream.⁸²

The fire that destroyed the Jewish neighborhood of Pera in 1203 and more generally, the severe blow suffered by the silk industry of Constantinople as a result of the city's fate in 1203–1204 induced the local silks workers, including the Jews, to seek employment elsewhere. They apparently settled in Nicaea, Asia Minor, which from 1208 and 1261 served as the capital of the Greek state established in Asia Minor. The expansion of the silk industry at Nicaea was stimulated by imperial support and the demand of the social elite. Unfavorable economic conditions prevented the renewal of silk manufacture in Constanti-

⁸⁰ Respectively *BT*, 16, 13, and 12 (Hebrew). The English translation *ibid.*, 14, 11 and 10, is not accurate, and therefore, I cite here my own version. See also Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry," 8–9, 17–8.

⁸¹ Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 462–3, 466–8, 485–8.

⁸² A. Louvi-Kizi, "Thebes," in *EHB*, II, 637, and the maps between 635 and 637. The location of the *Ebreika* or Jewish neighborhood west of the stream, as shown on the first map, does not rest on medieval evidence, and it is not self-evident that the modern location is identical to the medieval one. Moreover, the area is too small to have housed all the local Jews or only those engaged in the silk branch, who presumably lived in a segregated residential area.

nople after 1204, and the production of silk textiles was not among the manufacturing branches transferred from Nicaea to the capital after the restoration of Byzantine rule over the city in 1261. These factors explain why Jewish silk workers are no more attested in Constantinople after 1204. On the other hand, the silk industry of Nicaea was still operating in 1290, and its activity presumably continued until the city's fall to the Ottomans in 1331. Whether Jews were involved until then in its silk manufacture remains an open question.⁸³

The Jewish community of Thebes persisted beyond the Fourth Crusade and is attested as late as 1415.⁸⁴ Theban silk manufacture is indirectly illustrated until the 1380s.⁸⁵ Jewish participation in that activity is not attested, yet possible. In any event, there is good reason to believe that Moses Galimidi, who left Thebes for Negropont in the years 1260–1263, was familiar with sources of raw silk and the operation of silk workshops in Thebes. David Kalomiti, a rich Jewish merchant of Negropont involved in silk transactions, recruited him in his service. In the 1290s Kalomiti entrusted Galimidi's sons with the collection of raw silk, silk textiles, or both in Euboea and presumably also in neighboring territories. One of these sons later established himself in Thebes and another in Andros, an island producing both silk and silk textiles. Around 1340 some Jews residing in Negropont traded in silk textiles. One of them, Leo Psoma, shipped a large volume of raw silk to Venice around 1360.⁸⁶ However, there is no evidence that these Jews manufactured silk textiles.

Some Jews practiced silk weaving in Candia, though on a small scale. The textiles were sometimes of poor quality, as reported in 1342.⁸⁷ Small quantities of silk, as in 1373, were most likely intended for the

⁸³ D. Jacoby, "The Economy of Latin Constantinople, 1204–1261," in *Urbs capta. The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences. La IVe Croisade et ses conséquences*, ed. A. Laiou (Réalités Byzantines, 10) (Paris, 2005), 195–6; Jacoby, "The Jews and the Silk Industry," 17–20.

⁸⁴ Evidence in Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 77–8, 100, and 302–3, no. 117.

⁸⁵ On Theban silk manufacture after 1204, see D. Jacoby, "The Production of Silk Textiles in Latin Greece," in *Tekhnognosia ste latinokratoumene Hellada* (= *Technology in Latin-Occupied Greece*) (Athens, 2000), 23–7, reprinted in Jacoby, *Commercial Exchange*, no. XII.

⁸⁶ D. Jacoby, "Silk in Medieval Andros," in *Captain and Scholar. Papers in Memory of Demetrios I. Polemis*, eds. E. Chrysos and E. Zachariadou, (Andros, 2009), 145–6.

⁸⁷ Borsari, "Ricchi e poveri," 220–1; S. Theotokes, ed., *Thespismata tes benetikes gerosias, 1281–1385* (= *Decrees of the Venetian Senate, 1281–1385*) (Athens, 1937), I, 226, no. 544.

domestic production of girdles, hoods, veils, and kerchiefs.⁸⁸ This was presumably the type of work Jewish women performed at home, called *melekhet makhshevet* by Ovadiah of Bertinoro when describing his visit to Rhodes in 1487, unless it was embroidery.⁸⁹ The German Arnold von Harff bought some of the small high-grade silk pieces produced by local Jewish women while passing through Modone in 1496.⁹⁰ Their manufacture must have begun much earlier.

Jewish involvement in dyeing has already been mentioned above in passing. The epitaph of a dyer dated to the first half of the tenth century has been found in Corinth.⁹¹ A dyer appears in the Geniza document from the Aegean region dated to the tenth or eleventh century, as noted earlier.⁹² Jewish silk dyers are well attested in eleventh- and twelfth-century Constantinople and Thebes and in the writings of Karaite authors of that period.⁹³ Dyers were included among the Jews expelled from Chonai in the mid-twelfth century.⁹⁴ Strangely, Benjamin of Tudela mentions dyers in various locations, yet not in reference to the Empire which he crossed from 1161 to 1163. Some Jews practicing silk dyeing are attested in fifteenth-century Chios.⁹⁵

Byzantine Jews engaged in a wide range of occupations besides tanning, the manufacture of silk textiles, and dyeing. The Vita of St. Nikon reports that shortly after the expulsion of the entire Jewish population from Sparta around 985, a Greek hired and brought to the city a Jew performing the shearing of woolen cloth, an operation rendering the fabric finer and smoother.⁹⁶ A letter sent from Constantinople between 1092 and August 1096 mentions the sons of a local silversmith, presumably dead by that time.⁹⁷ In 1137 a rabbinical scholar was making

⁸⁸ Borsari, "Ricchi e poveri," 220.

⁸⁹ For the dating, see above n. 64.

⁹⁰ Starr, *Romania*, 64.

⁹¹ Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 148, no. 85.

⁹² See above, 230.

⁹³ See above, 236.

⁹⁴ See above, 230.

⁹⁵ See Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 36.

⁹⁶ D. Sullivan, ed. and tr., *The Life of Saint Nikon* (Brookline, 1987), 112–3, par. 33, and 118–21, par. 35, where the translation should be corrected; see Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 455. The expulsion of the Jews is also mentioned in Nikon's *Testament*, yet without reference to the Jewish craftsman: tr. in Thomas and Hero, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, I, 317.

⁹⁷ J. Mann, ed., *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature* (Cincinnati, 1931–1935), I, 48–51, and see II, 1458; partial tr. and discussion in Starr, *The Jews in*

and selling pancakes for a living in Constantinople.⁹⁸ Tailors manufacturing precious silk garments were active in that city and in Thebes around 1160.⁹⁹ The employment of Jewish tailors by private customers was partly promoted by the fear that Christian tailors might sew garments with fibers infringing the prohibition of *sha'atnez*.¹⁰⁰ A communal ordinance of 1363 issued in Candia provides that Christian tailors serving Jewish customers must work in the latter's home, in order to enable supervision.¹⁰¹ Jewish tanning must have furthered the work of Jewish cobblers. Around 1400 a fairly large number of them worked in Candia and others in Canea, western Crete. In 1420 a Jewish mason and his Christian partner undertook to build a cistern for a Jewish physician in Candia. A blacksmith worked in Chios in 1394 and two others in Candia before 1424. A shipwright was active in Chios in 1456.¹⁰² These crafts may have also been practiced by Byzantine Jews. On the other hand, the absence of evidence regarding Jewish sailors is not surprising. As in Muslim countries, the observance of the Sabbath and Jewish holidays had become ever stricter, to the extent that the merchant sailing on a ship was to refrain from moving objects from one place to another, as stated by a Karaite work of the mid-twelfth century.¹⁰³ The more comprehensive ban on work on the sacred days prompted Jews to abandon the occupation of sailor.¹⁰⁴

As noted above, many Jewish communities were established in Byzantine cities positioned along commercial routes or serving as political and administrative centers. Trade and credit fulfilled major functions in the economy of these cities. Not surprisingly, therefore, Jews were involved in commercial exchanges and in money-lending. The Vita of St. Constantine the Jew, apparently written after his death in 886 during

the Byzantine Empire, 182–4, no. 125. For the dating of the letter and the location of its writer, see Jacoby, "The Jewish Community of Constantinople," 32–5.

⁹⁸ Information included in the letter of 1137 mentioned above, 228.

⁹⁹ See above, 237.

¹⁰⁰ See above, 236. On the prohibition of *sha'atnez* "in the land of Greece," i.e. Byzantium and former Byzantine territories, in a commentary of the second half of the thirteenth century, see Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 119–20.

¹⁰¹ *Taqanot Qandya*, 33, no. 41.

¹⁰² For all these cases, see Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 34, 36–7.

¹⁰³ Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, 173 and citation in n. 14.

¹⁰⁴ On Muslim countries, see Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I, 311–2. The lone eleventh-century Jewish sailor from Egypt mentioned in a Geniza letter was an exception: see S. Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders* (Princeton, 1973), 125 and n. 24.

the reign of Emperor Leo VI (886–912), reports that he attempted to convert the Jews living in Nicaea “who dwelt there for the sake of its trade.”¹⁰⁵ Several instances of Jewish commercial activities have already been mentioned in passing. Their nature and range varied widely over time and space, whether conducted occasionally by individuals in addition to other occupations or continuously by professional merchants. The transition from Greek to Hebrew as literary language among Byzantine Jews had already been achieved by the late tenth century. It facilitated both written and oral communication between Byzantine and foreign Jews across political, cultural, and linguistic borders and undoubtedly furthered commercial exchanges between them.¹⁰⁶

The urban retail trade in Jewish edibles and wine was primarily aimed at the local Jewish market. These commodities were generally purchased from rural producers, who delivered them in town.¹⁰⁷ However, they were also imported from afar in response to an ever more variegated demand. Venetian merchants marketed a growing volume of Cretan cheese in Constantinople from the early eleventh century onward.¹⁰⁸ There is good reason to believe that Jews acted likewise with the kosher product, since it apparently reached Egypt somewhat later in that century.¹⁰⁹

Jewish urban retail trade also handled a broad range of other commodities. The Jews living in Pera crossed the Golden Horn to trade in the city proper. As noted above, some rich Jewish merchants whom Benjamin of Tudela encountered in Constantinople in 1161 or 1162 may have handled silk and silk textiles.¹¹⁰ It is likely that the Jews of Constantinople were in close contact with the Jewish merchants known as al-Radhaniyya, or Radhanites. Two Persian authors document the

¹⁰⁵ *Acta Sanctorum*, Nov. 4, 628–656; partial tr. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 119–22, no. 54. See *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, I, 506–7, s. v. Constantine the Jew.

¹⁰⁶ N. de Lange, “Hebrews, Greeks or Romans? Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium,” in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider* (Papers from the Thirty-second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1998), ed. D. Smythe (Aldershot, 2000), 105, 110–8.

¹⁰⁷ See above, 229.

¹⁰⁸ D. Jacoby, “Byzantine Crete in the Navigation and Trade Networks of Venice and Genoa,” in *Oriente e Occidente tra medioevo ed età moderna. Studi in onore di Geo Pitarino* (Università degli Studi di Genova, Sede di Acqui Terme, Collana di Fonti e Studi, 1.1), ed. L. Balletto (Acqui Terme 1997), 521–3, 525–9, reprinted in Jacoby, *Byzantium*, no. II.

¹⁰⁹ See below, 245.

¹¹⁰ See above, 231.

activity and itineraries of these merchants in the ninth and early tenth century. The Radhanites conducted wide-ranging trade between China and the West in stages through a series of interconnected regional networks. Some of them knew Greek and visited Constantinople. There is no information regarding the commodities they bought in the city for export, yet these presumably included raw silk bought illegally from Jews, as well as silk textiles conveyed to the West and to Egypt.¹¹¹ At the edge of the Empire a Jew of Cherson in the Crimea bought a number of Christian slaves in the last years of the eleventh century according to a hagiographic account, although Jews were legally barred from owning slaves.¹¹² The case is isolated and it is impossible to determine whether other Jews were involved in the slave trade at that time.

Byzantine Jews were clearly not confined to local trade. The purchase of rural products and their sale often required the intervention of traveling merchants and middlemen. Ninth- and tenth-century evidence from southern Italy illustrates inter-urban commerce in a limited radius.¹¹³ Around 960 a Jewish merchant of Bisignano, Calabria, transported his goods on an ass.¹¹⁴ Although not documented for the Empire, it is likely that Jews conducted a diversified type of commerce between city and countryside, as attested for Venetian Crete. In 1276 a Jew from Canea trading in the countryside to the east of the city along the bay of Suda was robbed of wax, silk, and grain apparently bought from peasants.¹¹⁵ Some Jews handled women's finery and sold to peasants ironware, haired skins, and tanned hides of domestic origin, whether in town or in the countryside.¹¹⁶

The story of the Jew Abraham of Constantinople who lent a considerable sum to the shipmaster Theodore and eventually embraced

¹¹¹ See Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance," 135–7; idem, "The Jews and the Silk Industry," 4–5. On the Radhanites, see also M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy. Communications and Commerce AD 300–900* (Cambridge, 2001), 688–93.

¹¹² Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 19, 31–2, 96–7, no. 18, and 209–11, no. 155.

¹¹³ Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 30.

¹¹⁴ *Acta Sanctorum*, Sept. 7, 282–3; tr. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 161, no. 105.

¹¹⁵ Gottlieb L. Fr. Tafel und G. Thomas, eds., *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig* (Wien, 1856–1857), III, 257; dating by G. Morgan, "The Venetian Claims Commission of 1278," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 69 (1976): 431 no. 137.

¹¹⁶ *Taqanot Qandya*, 5 no. 10, of 1228; Hippolyte Noiret, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire de la domination vénitienne en Crète de 1380 à 1485* (Paris, 1892), 253–4, 269, respectively of 1416 and 1419.

the Christian faith is firmly anchored in a Byzantine mercantile context. The sedentary Jew granted a sea loan to the traveling Christian manager, the profit being divided between them. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine whether the story, set in the seventh century, reflects that period or rather the tenth or eleventh century in which it was recorded.¹¹⁷ The joint maritime enterprise is described in a casual way revealing that commercial associations between Jews and Christians were not considered unusual. Similar successful ventures in the past may explain the sources of the Jew's wealth. It is likely that his was not an isolated case. In the mid-twelfth century the Karaite Yehuda ben Eliyahu Hadassi referred to joint enterprises binding Jews and non-Jews, insisting upon the prohibition to settle accounts on the Sabbath.¹¹⁸

Paradoxically, Jewish merchants engaging in regional and long-distance maritime trade prior to the thirteenth century are better documented than those conducting local commerce. These merchants traded between the Empire's provinces and its capital, as well as beyond the Byzantine borders. Shefatiah ben Amittai of Oria sailed to Constantinople in 873/874 to convince Emperor Basil I to revoke his decree enjoining the forced conversion of the Jews. The story, reported by the *Chronicle of Ahima'az*, does not refer to trade, yet seen in context suggests similar voyages for business purposes.¹¹⁹ Jewish merchants of Byzantine southern Italy must have frequently traveled to Constantinople, as implied by the imperial decree of 992 prohibiting Venetian ships leaving the capital from carrying them back home.¹²⁰ In 1066 the archbishop of Bari, Andreas, left his see for Constantinople, where he embraced Judaism.¹²¹ It is surprising that he should have sailed to the capital, where he was likely to be arrested following his conversion, unless Jewish merchants from Bari assisted him in his escape, he joined some of them trading in the Empire's capital, or else found refuge with local Jewish merchants acquainted with the latter.

¹¹⁷ On the legendary and possibly factual elements in the story, see P. Magdalino, "Constantinopolitana," in *Aetos. Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango, presented to him on April 14, 1998*, eds. I. Sevcenko and I. Hutter (Stuttgart, 1998), 220–4. On the nature of the partnership, see Laiou, "Byzantium and the Commercial Revolution," 241.

¹¹⁸ Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, 180, n. 43.

¹¹⁹ Klar, *Megillat Ahima'az*, 17–20, esp. 18; tr. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 127–9, nos. 63–64.

¹²⁰ See above, 234.

¹²¹ Jacoby, "The Jews of Constantinople," 226.

Eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantine trade with Egypt is fairly well documented.¹²² Three Geniza letters written between 1020 and 1035 illustrate maritime trade and piracy along the southern coast of Asia Minor. Each of them deals with a particular group of Jewish merchants from Attaleia, captured and robbed of their money and goods by Muslim pirates and later ransomed in Egypt. The original destination of these merchants is not stated, yet they were apparently caught while sailing either to Constantinople or to Alexandria. Attaleia was at that time a major transit station along the waterway linking these two cities. Muslim pirates pursued their raids in Byzantine waters, as reported by another Geniza letter written between 1065 and 1080 which implies that these activities affected Jewish merchants. The shipping of kosher cheese, medicinal plants, and drugs from Asia Minor to Egypt in the eleventh-twelfth centuries hints at the handling of a much broader range of commodities.¹²³

This was presumably also the case in Byzantine Crete. By the first half of the eleventh century the island was exporting its surplus cheese to various destinations including Constantinople, and by 1060s or 1070s a wider variety of agricultural and pastoral products to Alexandria. Cretan merchants participated in that traffic. It is likely that Jews were already involved by that time in the shipping of Cretan kosher produce. An eleventh- or twelfth-century Geniza letter written in Alexandria apparently deals with the production of Cretan cheese flavored with seeds or herbs. A Jewish lawsuit conducted in Cairo in 1097/1098 reveals the import of high-quality Cretan dodder of thyme, a medicinal plant, which was partly re-exported from Egypt to the countries of the Indian Ocean.¹²⁴ In 1105 a *parnas* or communal dignitary from Crete visited Cairo, a further indication of connections between Cretan and Egyptian Jews.¹²⁵ A rather unusual voyage was undertaken by the Byzantine Jewish merchant from Constantinople who redeemed

¹²² D. Jacoby, "Byzantine Trade with Egypt from the Mid-Tenth Century to the Fourth Crusade," *Thesaurismata* 30 (2000), pp. 25–77, reprinted in Jacoby, *Commercial Exchange*, no. I; A. Laiou, "Byzantine Trade with Christians and Muslims and the Crusades," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, eds. A. Laiou and R. Mottahedeh (Washington D.C., 2001), 188.

¹²³ Jacoby, "What Do We Learn about Byzantine Asia Minor," 87–93.

¹²⁴ See Jacoby, "Byzantine Crete," 519–30. On the lawsuit, see S. D. Goitein and M. A. Friedman, *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Geniza ('India Book')*, (Leiden, 2008), 167–202, esp. 171, 173, 189–91, 199.

¹²⁵ See Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, II, 130–1 and 444, Appendix B 25.

at the slave market of Prague a young Jew taken captive in a military campaign staged in 1030 or 1031.¹²⁶

Kosher edibles and wine were generally entrusted to Jewish merchants, who escorted them to their destination to guarantee their fitness for Jewish consumption. A case in point deserves to be mentioned, although preceding the period covered here. A late sixth-century wreck, *Iskandil Burnu A*, found off the coast of southwest Asia Minor facing the island of Kos, carried wine in amphoras common for the Gaza region, as well as a kosher casserole with a sealed lid.¹²⁷ These must have belonged to a Jewish merchant accompanying the cargo on its way to Constantinople, rather than to the ship's captain.¹²⁸ The shipping of kosher commodities clearly implies the involvement of Jewish merchants in regional and long-distance maritime trade.

Further support for that involvement is offered by the constant eleventh- and twelfth-century two-way movement of Jews and Jewish letters between Constantinople, the Byzantine provinces, and Egypt. It is likely that the letters were generally conveyed to Egypt by Jewish merchants, although this was not always the case. The one entrusted between 1092 and August 1096 to a merchant from Amalfi who was about to sail from Constantinople to Egypt suggests that there were no Jews on board the ships leaving at that time.¹²⁹ The engagement of Byzantine Jews in maritime trade is further suggested by a twelfth-century woman writing from the Empire to her brothers living in Egypt. She requested them to come and fetch her, like the Byzantine Jews redeeming their captive brethren, and advised them to take merchandise along the way.¹³⁰ She thereby hinted to the practice common among these Jews, who combined trading with charitable work.

¹²⁶ Tr. and commentary Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 192–4, no. 136. For the dating and context, see E. Patlagean, "Byzance et les marchés du grand commerce, vers 830–vers 1030: entre Pirenne et Polanyi," in *Mercati e mercanti nell'alto medioevo: l'area euroasiatica e l'area mediterranea* (Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, XL) (Spoleto, 1993), 610–1.

¹²⁷ F. van Doorninck, Jr., "Byzantine Shipwrecks," in *EHB*, II, 900.

¹²⁸ For the presumed itinerary, see McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 601, Table 20.5, Wreck no. 21, and the map on 592 for the shipping route. McCormick, *ibid.*, 603, speculates that the Jew may have been the ship's captain. This is unlikely in view of the restrictions on Jewish sea-faring mentioned above, 241.

¹²⁹ On that letter, see above, 240. It is clear that Jews only carried letters to places like Jerusalem to which Italians did not travel on business in that period.

¹³⁰ J. Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs* (Oxford, 1920), II, 306–7; tr. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 214–5, no. 162, pp. 32–4.

In view of the evidence adduced so far, it is rather surprising that the eleventh- and twelfth-century sources reporting the arrival and trading of Byzantine ships and merchants in Alexandria do not refer to Jews. This is especially the case with respect to Geniza letters, since one would have expected their authors to single out Jewish traders. At first glance, then, it would seem that Byzantine Jews did not arrive on these ships. However, a perusal of Geniza letters dealing with foreign merchants reveals that their writers always focused upon the origin of the merchants, the goods that could be exchanged with them, and business prospects. In that context they had no reason to distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish merchants. It is possible, therefore, that the writers also applied the appellation *Rum* to Jewish Byzantine merchants.¹³¹ Alternatively, though, they refrained from referring to these merchants since the latter, possibly because of their limited resources, failed to acquire the costly spices, dyestuffs, and aromatics that the merchants of Alexandria were so eager to sell and instead focused on cheaper commodities.

At first glance a chrysobull issued by Emperor Manuel I in 1153 seems to imply Jewish ownership of sea-going vessels. The document lists a series of imperial grants to the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, which included the tax owed by the Jews of Strobilos, Asia Minor, followed by tax exemptions on the shipping of goods. In fact, there is no connection whatsoever between the two items.¹³² It follows that Byzantine Jews engaging in commercial voyages entirely depended upon non-Jewish carriers.

We have already noted the Jew of Constantinople who between 1092 and August 1096 requested an Amalfitan merchant to carry a letter to Egypt.¹³³ The confidence he displayed towards the merchant hints at business relations between sedentary local Jews and traveling merchants, whether Byzantine or foreign. These may have been investments of liquid capital in a partnership, as in the case of Abraham and the shipmaster Theodore,¹³⁴ or the shipping of goods for sale abroad in return for a share of the profit. Such an arrangement was concluded in

¹³¹ On the use of *Rum* for 'Byzantine,' see Jacoby, "Byzantine Trade with Egypt," 27-9, 36-8, 40-5.

¹³² See Jacoby, "What Do We Learn about Byzantine Asia Minor," 90, n. 34.

¹³³ See above, 240.

¹³⁴ See above, n. 97.

1111 by Kalopetros Xanthos, a Greek resident of Constantinople, with the Venetian Enrico Zusto, to whom he entrusted silk garments to be sold in Egypt.¹³⁵ By that time the Italian merchants and ship operators were successfully extending their share of traffic between Byzantium and Egypt at the expense of their Byzantine counterparts.¹³⁶ This development may have gradually reduced the number of Byzantine Jewish merchants sailing to Egypt.

These merchants are no longer attested after the Fourth Crusade. This may be due to the absence of Geniza documents reflecting their activity, yet also to political-territorial developments and some fundamental changes in the trade pattern between the Empire and Egypt. The Empire's territorial losses to the Seljuqs in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and to the Latins in the first half of the thirteenth century turned many Byzantine subjects and their descendants into foreigners, and reduced the volume and variety of goods that Byzantine merchants could offer. This is well illustrated by the Venetian conquest of Crete, initiated in 1207. The island's Jews became Venetian subjects, and as a result, their export of kosher wine and cheese to Egypt and Constantinople was henceforth carried out so to speak under the Venetian flag. In addition, the Italian dominance in trade and shipping between the Empire and Egypt, already established in the course of the twelfth century, was further consolidated in the following period, Venice and Genoa acquiring a virtual monopoly on maritime transportation between these regions.¹³⁷

The Latin conquests of Byzantine territory in the early thirteenth century were followed by several inter-related economic developments: a partial re-orientation in the flow of goods in the Mediterranean, the restructuring of commercial and shipping networks in the region, and

¹³⁵ L. Lanfranchi, ed., *Famiglia Zusto* (Fonti per la storia di Venezia, Sez. IV: Archivi privati) (Venezia, 1955), 23–4, no. 6. See also Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 496.

¹³⁶ Jacoby, "Byzantine Trade with Egypt," 47–77; D. Jacoby, "Venetian Commercial Expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean, 8th–11th centuries," in *Byzantine Trade, 4th–12th Centuries. The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange* (Papers of the Thirty-eight Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St. John's College, University of Oxford, March 2004), ed. M. M. Mango (Farnham, 2009), 384–91.

¹³⁷ See previous note; Jacoby, "The Economy of Latin Constantinople," 202–8; D. Jacoby, "Byzantine Traders in Mamluk Egypt," in *Byzantium, State and Society. In Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*, eds. A. Avramea, A. Laiou, E. Chrysos (Athens, 2003), 249–68, reprinted in D. Jacoby, *Latins, Greeks and Muslims: Encounters in the Eastern Mediterranean, Tenth-Fifteenth Centuries* (Farnham, 2009), no. XI.

the intensification of trade, and navigation in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, as well as between these regions. This last process was especially pronounced after the Byzantine recovery of Constantinople in 1261.¹³⁸ Within the shrinking Empire of the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries only this city yields information regarding Jewish involvement in the Byzantine economy, namely, in manufacture, trade, and credit.¹³⁹ However, in view of the particular nature of Constantinople's economy, this information cannot be considered as representative of Jewish economic activities elsewhere in the remaining territories of the Empire.

The function of Constantinople as a major transit and transshipment station was greatly enhanced by the growing regional and inter-regional trade and shipping conducted by Genoa and Venice after 1261.¹⁴⁰ The two cities turned their respective privileged quarter, the Genoese in Pera and the Venetian in the city proper, into virtual extra-territorial enclaves. In addition, their grant of national status to foreigners, mostly imperial subjects, created sizeable 'national' communities shielded from imperial taxation and jurisdiction and in their midst, two distinct Jewish communities enjoying Venetian and Genoese status respectively.¹⁴¹ The members of these communities thus enjoyed privileged conditions that enabled them to compete successfully with Byzantine Jews pursuing the same activities and divert business from them.¹⁴² It is likely that a growing number of Byzantine Jews adhered over time to the 'Italian' communities in order to enhance their own

¹³⁸ See D. Jacoby, "The Economy of Latin Constantinople," 195–214; idem, "Changing Economic Patterns in Latin Romania: The Impact of the West," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium*, 197–233.

¹³⁹ On manufacture, see the treatment of tanning, above, 231–32.

¹⁴⁰ N. Oikonomidès, *Hommes d'affaires grecs et latins à Constantinople (XIII^e–XV^e siècles)* (Montréal, 1979).

¹⁴¹ On the naturalization policy, see D. Jacoby, "Les Vénitiens naturalisés dans l'Empire byzantin: un aspect de l'expansion de Venise en Romanie du XIII^e au milieu du XV^e siècle," *Travaux et Mémoires* 8 (1981) (= *Hommage à M. Paul Lemerle*), 217–35, reprinted in Jacoby, *Studies*, no. IX; idem, "Les Génois dans l'Empire byzantin: citoyens, sujets et protégés (1261–1453)," *La Storia dei Genovesi* 9 (1989), 245–84, reprinted in Jacoby, *Trade*, no. III. On the three distinct Jewish communities and neighborhoods after 1261, see Jacoby, "Les quartiers juifs de Constantinople," 189–216; for the Genoese, see also M. Balard, *La Romanie génoise (XII^e–début du XV^e siècle)* (Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 235) (Rome, 1978), I, 277–9.

¹⁴² We have already encountered the groups of Venetian and Byzantine Jewish tanners active around 1320: see above, 231–32.

economic activity, although the Vlanga community persisted until the Ottoman conquest of 1453.¹⁴³

The export of kosher wine and cheese from Crete to Constantinople, suggested by the eleventh- and twelfth-century documentation, is duly attested in the following period. These commodities sailed on board Venetian and clearly, to a lesser extent on Genoese ships.¹⁴⁴ We have no evidence regarding the receiving end of that traffic, yet it is obvious that the retail trade was handled by Venetian and Genoese Jews in their own shops. The production of high-grade wines in Crete was furthered from the 1330s onward by the introduction of malvasia vine-stocks and a substantial expansion of vineyards in response to a growing foreign, diversified demand.¹⁴⁵ It is likely that, similarly, a wider variety of kosher wines was exported to satisfy Jewish customers. In view of Constantinople's function as a transit center, the Cretan wine reaching the city must have been increasingly distributed to Jewish communities in the neighboring territories of Thrace and Asia Minor and around the Black Sea, regardless of whether they were under Byzantine or foreign rule. The substantial growth in imports in the first half of the fifteenth century and the losses to the imperial treasury deriving from the sale of tax-exempted kosher wine to Byzantine subjects induced the imperial authorities to react to what they considered the misuse of Venetian fiscal privileges. Sometime before 1450 they imposed a special tax on the wine imported by Venetian Jews, despite the fiscal exemptions to which they were entitled as Venice's subjects. The tax was levied by a new office called *scribania vegetum Judeorum venetorum*, or 'office of the casks of Venetian Jews.'¹⁴⁶ The sale and transit of Cretan kosher wine and cheese called for the intervention of local Jewish merchants and middlemen.

Their operations also extended to other commodities. The account book of the Venetian Giacomo Badoer, who traded in Constantinople from 1436 to 1440, provides abundant evidence regarding his busi-

¹⁴³ On the latter, see above, 232.

¹⁴⁴ Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 29–30.

¹⁴⁵ Jacoby, "Mediterranean Food," 143–4.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas, *Diplomatarium*, II, 379–80. See also Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 31. On the officer in charge of the office, see K.-P. Matschke, "Tore, Torwächter und Torzöllner von Konstantinopel in spätbyzantinischer Zeit," *Jahrbuch für Regionalgeschichte* 16/2 (1989): 55.

ness transactions with thirty Jews, most of them local residents.¹⁴⁷ The majority of the transactions, some of them quite large, involved Jews selling high-grade silk imported from the region of the Caspian Sea and purchasing western silk cloth, silk veils, and woolens or bartering the silk for these goods. The silk was shipped to Venice, while the precious Italian textiles were re-exported to Black Sea ports and especially to Ottoman territories. They were in high demand among the Ottoman elite in Adrianople/Edirne, the Ottoman capital at that time, and in Bursa, Asia Minor.¹⁴⁸ Some Jews bought western gold thread used in embroidery, either for their own work or to resell it, and one of them purchased tin brought from Venice.¹⁴⁹ Jews also handled various commodities imported from the Black Sea and sold them to Venetians, namely, pepper arriving from Caffa in the Crimea, hides, and wax, especially of Bulgarian origin. In 1394 the Jew Callo Cirnichiotti sold a Tartar slave to a resident of Ancona, according to a document drafted by Bartholomeo de Starsoldo, notary and chancellor of the Venetian court in Constantinople.¹⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, some polyglot Jews took advantage of their linguistic skills to act as middlemen and interpreters between merchants of various origins.¹⁵¹

It would seem that the Jews residing in Constantinople in the late fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century engaged primarily in local trade. Some of them, though, were involved in regional maritime commerce in the eastern Mediterranean and in the Black Sea, the range of which varied. In 1389 the physician Baronus, a Genoese Jew residing in Pera, willed a quarter of his movable wealth to his son-in-law Ismael from Chios, also a physician, on condition that his investments would be limited to trade in a region extending from the island of Tenedos in the northeastern Aegean to Constantinople and in the

¹⁴⁷ Dorini e Bertelè, *Il libro dei conti di Giacomo Badoer*.

¹⁴⁸ D. Jacoby, "The Silk Trade of Late Byzantine Constantinople," in *550th Anniversary of the Istanbul University. International Byzantine and Ottoman Symposium (XVth century)* (30–31 May 2003), ed. S. Atasoy (Istanbul, 2004), 134–40, 142–4.

¹⁴⁹ For this whole paragraph, see Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 41–2.

¹⁵⁰ G. Tamba, ed., *Bernardo de Rodulfis, notaio in Venezia (1392–1399)* (Fonti per la storia di Venezia, Sez. III—Archivi notarili) (Venezia, 1974), 109–10, no. 101.

¹⁵¹ G. Bertelè, *Il Libro dei conti di Giacomo Badoer (Costantinopoli 1436–1440). Complemento e indici* (Padova 2002), 173, s. v. Cain; 196–197, s. v. Pulixoto; 198, s. v. Samaria zudio sanser.

Black Sea.¹⁵² The purpose of the geographic restriction was to minimize the risks. Newly settled Jews and their descendants often conducted joint ventures with relatives in their land of origin or traded along 'national' lines, Genoese Jews with Genoese-ruled territories such as Chios and Mytilene and Venetian Jews with Venetian Crete. There were nevertheless ventures conducted jointly by Genoese and Venetian Jews, as well as by Jews and non-Jews.¹⁵³ In 1400 the patriarchal court in Constantinople dealt with a commercial loan granted by a Jew to a Greek merchant in the previous year, and in 1438 a lawsuit opposing Giacomo Badoer and a Jew accused of defaulting was brought before an imperial judge.¹⁵⁴ In 1443 the Venetian bailo or state representative Marino Soranzo issued a verdict in favor of a group of creditors including several Jews who had loaned a large sum to Gabriele Catacalo, notary and interpreter at the bailo's court.¹⁵⁵ Business cooperation with foreign non-Jews is convincingly illustrated by a statement of Emperor Manuel II. In 1418 he accused Venetian citizens, subjects, and Jews of defrauding the imperial treasury by declaring at the customs goods belonging to imperial subjects and to Turks as their own, thus exempting them from the payment of taxes.¹⁵⁶

The Jewish role in the Byzantine economy in the period extending from the seventh to the mid-fifteenth century can be reconstructed to a limited extent only, in view of the sporadic nature of the sources and the imbalance in their distribution. It is nevertheless clear that the Jews were firmly integrated within the production, manufacture, and service sectors of the Empire's economy, though to varying degrees determined by local and regional conditions. Except for ritual and communal functions, there were no distinctive Jewish occupations,

¹⁵² M. Balard, "Péra au XIV^e siècle: Documents notariés des archives de Gênes," in M. Balard, A. Laiou, C. Otten-Froux, *Les Italiens à Byzance* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 6) (Paris 1987), 35, no. 75, and see also no. 74. Similar restrictions appear in charters drafted in Black Sea ports: see Oikonomidès, *Hommes d'affaires*, 39.

¹⁵³ Jacoby, "The Jews in Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean," 45.

¹⁵⁴ F. Miklosich et J. Müller, eds., *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana* (Wien, 1860–1890), II, 313–314, no. DXXX; Matschke, "Tore," 55–6.

¹⁵⁵ The verdict was transcribed ten years later in Pera: A. Roccatagliata, "Notai genovesi in oltremare. Atti rogati a Pera (1453)," *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia patria*, n. s. 39 (CXIII) (1999), 136–42, no 11.

¹⁵⁶ J. Chrysostomides, "Venetian Commercial Privileges under the Palaeologi," *Studi Veneziani* 12 (1970), 354–5, no. 19.

nor any economic activities exclusively carried out by Jews, whether voluntarily or imposed.

Jews operated within two distinct, though partly overlapping and strongly interwoven economic networks. The internal network handling kosher edibles and wine was a closed circuit, yet required constant cooperation with non-Jews. Its operation was partly supported by Jewish farmers and the exploitation of agricultural and pastoral resources held by Jews, possibly far more than has been perceived until now. The intensification of commercial exchanges in and around Byzantium and the growing demand for alternative qualities from the second half of the thirteenth century onward apparently promoted the expansion of kosher food and wine production, whether directly or indirectly, and may account for the establishment of additional Jewish rural settlements in the Aegean region.¹⁵⁷ Still, the Jewish network was never self-sufficient, and its operation was linked to the patterns of the general economic system with respect to capital investment, business arrangements, production, transportation, distribution, and sale. Its geographic range and diffusion pattern nevertheless differed from those of non-kosher products, since they were exclusively determined by the wide dispersion and location of Jewish settlements in the Empire and beyond its borders.

The concentration of Jewish activity in tanning, dyeing, and the manufacture of silk textiles, as well as in activities related to these operations such as leather work and the tailoring of garments, is traceable over several centuries. However, in view of the fragmentary nature of the sources, one should beware of far-reaching conclusions, such as ascribing to the Jewish craftsmen a dominant role in these branches. The operations of Jewish tanners in Constantinople in the region of Vlanga around 1320 are primarily illustrated by documents recording the controversy between Byzantium and Venice surrounding their activity.¹⁵⁸ The presence of tanners not cooperating with Venetian entrepreneurs in other sections of the city cannot be ruled out.¹⁵⁹ A similar problem regarding the evaluation of the sources arises with respect to the manufacture of silk textiles and garments. Benjamin of Tudela's glowing description of Jewish skills should not lead

¹⁵⁷ On which see above, 225–26.

¹⁵⁸ See above, 231–32.

¹⁵⁹ On the other hand it would seem that at specific periods Jewish tanners were dominant in Candia and Modon: see above, 232–33.

us to overestimate the Jewish contribution to the development of the Byzantine silk industry, even in the twelfth century.¹⁶⁰ The importance of Jewish involvement in the Theban silk industry of that period is undeniable, yet the documentation also points to non-Jewish workers. In the absence of quantitative data, it is impossible to determine the respective share of Jewish or Greek workers in manufacture, whether in Thebes or elsewhere in the Empire.

Jewish craftsmen and merchants benefited from the rising demand for kosher products, hides, and silk textiles in the Empire and beyond its borders, as well as from the intensification of maritime traffic in the eastern Mediterranean in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Their involvement in maritime trade and voyages took place within the framework of growing exchanges between the Byzantine provinces and the imperial capital, on the one hand, and between the Empire and Egypt on the other. This last process was promoted by a re-orientation in the flow of costly oriental spices, dyestuffs, and aromatics and by the dominant role acquired by Egypt as their main outlet to the eastern Mediterranean in the eleventh century.¹⁶¹ The Jewish share in Byzantine-Egyptian maritime trade beyond kosher products cannot be assessed. Jewish participation in commercial exchanges between the Empire and Egypt must have progressively declined in the twelfth century, like that of Greek merchants, as a result of the increasing role acquired by Italian merchants and carriers in that framework. It may have practically stopped in the thirteenth century, while Egypt's supply in kosher cheese and wine from Crete, now a Venetian colony, was on the rise.

Constantinople's enhanced function as a transit and distribution center from the second half of the thirteenth century onward promoted a substantial expansion of the city's service sector. In the first half of the fifteenth century, Jews offered space for the storage of goods, traded in various commodities, and provided assistance as middlemen, interpreters, and sources of credit. It should be stressed that in contrast to the Christian West, which considered lending at interest as sinful, such operations were regarded in Byzantium as legitimate and the state permitted them while regulating and controlling interest rates.¹⁶² As a

¹⁶⁰ As done by several authors. See my critical remarks in that respect: Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium," 487 and n. 199.

¹⁶¹ Jacoby, "Venetian Commercial Expansion," 381, 386–7.

¹⁶² A. E. Laiou, "Economic Thought and Ideology," in *EHB*, III, 1136–9.

result, there was no economic 'void' prompting or attracting Byzantine Jews to practice money-lending as a profession. They had to compete with their Christian counterparts on an equal footing, and their role in money-lending appears to have been rather limited.

Benjamin of Tudela, who crossed the Empire from 1161 to 1163, is the only source to offer quantitative data regarding Jewish population in the Empire in the long period covered by this study. However, that data is restricted to twenty-two communities and fails to cover all those existing at the time.¹⁶³ The lack of adequate demographic evidence prevents any assessment of the total number of Byzantine Jews at any given time, and the figures suggested so far are mere speculations. In any event, it is clear that the Jews represented only a marginal element within the Byzantine population. Moreover, in view of their small numbers and their limited resources, their overall contribution to the economy of Byzantium remained minor,¹⁶⁴ although their concentration and economic activity were particularly intensive at some specific locations and during specific periods.

¹⁶³ For the dating of Benjamin's sojourn in Byzantium, see above, n. 14. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 337, lists communities documented in the twelfth century, yet not mentioned by Benjamin.

¹⁶⁴ This was clearly also the case with respect to the taxes they paid, although the nature of these taxes remains a vexing problem, not solved so far.

JEWISH SURVIVAL IN LATE ANTIQUE ALEXANDRIA

Guy G. Stroumsa

For Peter Brown

Of all the books filling the bookshelves, or *bibliothēkai*, in the great library of Hellenistic Alexandria, the one which would be destined to have the most successful and far-reaching career, which would exert, by far, the deepest influence on Western religious and cultural history, was not any of those coming from classical Athens, but the rather bland and awkward Greek version of one of the “Sacred Books of the East” which the Ptolemies sought to collect.¹ The Septuagint soon found its myth in the *Epistle of Aristeas*. Yet, it stands to reason that the translation was not only made by Jews, but also for Jews, and that it remained little read by Greeks in Alexandria, despite their participation, together with the Jews, in the annual festival honoring the translation project, “the feast and general assembly in the island of Pharos,” the mass picnic on the seashore described by Philo.² The Septuagint represents the most impressive monument of Jewish Hellenism, the acme of what one might be tempted to call the cultural symbiosis between Jews and Greeks in Ptolemaic Alexandria, were it not that such a concept painfully evokes that of the “German-Jewish symbiosis.” In Philo’s time, indeed, the cultural achievements of the Jewish *politeuma* belonged to the past, and the coexistence between Greeks, Egyptians, and Jews—

¹ Cf. the words of P. Vidal-Naquet: “Cependant, pour que le monde romain devienne juif, il a fallu d’abord que les juifs devinssent grecs. Selon le mot que je cite souvent d’Elias Bickerman, ‘Les juifs sont devenus le peuple du Livre quand ce livre a été traduit en grec.’ C’est là une longue histoire, qui commence à Alexandrie mais dont Jérusalem est également partie prenante.” *L’Atlantide: petite histoire d’un mythe platonicien* (Paris, 2005), 53. I should like to thank my colleagues Oded Irshai, Daniel Schwartz, and Miriam Fraenkel for their useful remarks.

² *Vita Mosis* II. 41–42 [LCL VI, 469]. See E. Starobinski-Safran, “La communauté juive d’Alexandrie à l’époque de Philon,” in *Alexandrina: Mélanges offerts au P. Claude Mondésert* (Paris, 1992), 45–75. On the Septuagint, see S. Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria: A Study in the Narrative of the Letter of Aristeas* (London, 2003); and A. Wasserstein and D. J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint, from Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge, 2005).

which had always remained at best fragile—was about to collapse for good. Pogroms could now be launched by the Roman authorities (for instance in 38 C.E.), the Jews of Alexandria could now be forcefully dislodged and concentrated, under squalid conditions, into one of the five quarters of the city, into what we should perhaps call the first ghetto in Jewish history, ages before that of Venice, which dates from 1516. The worst, though, was yet to come, in large-scale massacres after the Jewish messianic revolt stemming from Cyrenaica in 115, which would bring about the practical extinction of the Alexandrian Jewish community in 117.³ It is of course only much later, in the Christianized Empire, that world fame would come to the Septuagint, when the golden days of Alexandrian Judaism had paled in the cultural memory of the Jews, receding into two or three short and ambivalent references in the Talmud.⁴ For the Sages of Israel, the glory that had been Alexandria was bound to end in catastrophe, as it was only just heavenly punishment for the sin of having dared to go back to Egypt, the land of slavery.⁵ As is well-known, the Septuagint and Philo were soon erased from Jewish memory, and it is only thanks to the Church Fathers that remnants of Jewish Hellenistic literature have reached us.

What became, then, of Alexandrian Judaism? Could the fate of Hellenistic Jews have been annihilation? Or did it, rather, go underground, disappearing only from our limited field of vision? For Joseph Scaliger, this represented a major question of historical scholarship. For him, this fate emulated that of the ten lost tribes of Israel, which occupied some of the best minds in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Did the Jews all convert to the new faith, recognizing, in opposition to other Jewish communities, the Messiah? After all, Philo, a contemporary of Paul who had testified about the first monks, the Therapeutae, could in a sense be considered as the first Church Father. The thesis of the mass conversion of Alexandrian Jews to Christianity in the early second century seems to have found much of its appeal in the dramatic lack of evidence for the beginnings of Christianity itself in Alexandria. One may note that this thesis reflects the modern sus-

³ See V. Tcherikover, "The Decline of the Jewish Diaspora in the Roman Period," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 14 (1963): 1–32; and J. Méléze-Modrzejewski, *Les juifs d'Égypte de Ramsès II à Hadrien* (Paris, 1997), 223–304.

⁴ These few references have been recently studied by N. Hacham, "From Splendor to Disgrace: On the Destruction of Egyptian Jewry in Rabbinic Literature," *Tarbiz* 72 (2003): 463–88 (Hebrew).

⁵ *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, II (Horowitz 95–96). Parallel text in *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*, on Ex. 14:13 (Epstein-Meemed 56).

picion, among orthodox Jews, that any opening of Judaism to ambient culture, like that exemplified by Moses Mendelssohn, is bound to end in “assimilation” and conversion to Christianity.

Another thesis, which regained some short-lived popularity in the last generation, is the theory proponed by Moritz Friedlaender in his *Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticizmus* (Goettingen, 1898): Gnostic speculations would have found their origins among Alexandrian Jews. Philo, moreover, also reflected such Pre-Christian Gnostic theories, which focused upon “les malheurs de Sophie,” as Henri-Irénée Marrou called Gnostic mythology.⁶

Scaliger’s problem has yet to be solved. No one knows for sure what happened to Alexandria’s Jews. Arnaldo Momigliano, who was in the secret of the gods, told me once, in his usual peremptory way, that the Jews stopped writing in Greek “because of the Christians.” I did not think I was authorized to cast a doubt, or even ask for a reference, but I have never seen this opinion of his in print.

Thanks to the Cairo Genizah, we now have some later examples of Greek texts written by Jews, but these stem from the medieval times, are written in Hebrew characters, and originate from various parts of the Byzantine Empire, but not, most probably, from Alexandria.⁷

About the *Fortleben* of the Jews in late antique Alexandria, we know precious little. Except for Josephus, we possess no Jewish literary texts written in Greek after Philo, and papyri do not tell us much about Alexandria, a place not dry enough for their preservation. Jewish inscriptions from Roman Egypt, moreover, do not amount to very much.⁸ The fewer facts one possesses, the more one is tempted to muse, like the philosophical historian, on the sad fate of the Jews in late antique Alexandria, who seem, like a Phoenix, to be periodically reborn from their ashes, between persecution and expulsion.

At the time of the Roman conquest of Egypt, Jews, Greeks, and Egyptians had already had a long history of quite tense relationships in Alexandria, a city famous for its unruly citizenry. Alexandrian multiculturalism, as I have argued elsewhere, was more often myth than reality,

⁶ See B. Pearson, “Friedländer Revisited: Alexandrian Judaism and Gnostic Origins,” in *Gnosticism, Judaism and Egyptian Christianity*, ed. B. Pearson (Minneapolis, 1990), 1–28.

⁷ See N. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah* (Tübingen, 1996).

⁸ Papyri: V. A. Tcherikover, A. Fuks, M. Stern, with D. M. Lewis, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1957–1964).

and it is with much difficulty that the different ethnic groups coexisted in its well-drawn streets.⁹ The traditional strong dislike between Jews and Egyptians is reflected in the anti-Jewish calumnies of the Egyptian priest Manetho, writing in the first half of the third century B.C.E. The tension and mutual aversion between Egyptians and Greeks was no less strong, but it was often compounded by anti-Jewish sentiment, as in the *Oracle of the Potter*: “Attack the Jews! Do not allow your city [sc. Heliopolis] to be abandoned.”¹⁰ While the destruction of Alexandria (*Alexandrea ad Aegyptum*: Alexandria’s identity is never quite Egyptian) is still hoped for, it is the Jews, not the Greeks, who are depicted as the main enemy of Egypt in the extant sections of this text.

If the Romans tried at first to calm things down and to request moderation from all sides, they soon got involved in ethnic politics, usually on the side of the Greeks, so that the Jews were often caught between the Greeks and the Egyptians.¹¹ In 41 C.E., the prefect of Egypt, L. Aemilius Rectus, published a letter of Claudius to the city, in which the emperor refers to the troubles and revolts, or more precisely, as he has it, to “the war against the Jews.” Calling on the two sides to cool their passions, he asks the Alexandrians to respect the Jews, who have lived in their city for so long, as well as their cult, and demands of the Jews not to seek to acquire new privileges in a city which is not theirs. They should not, hence, invite to the city Jews from Syria or from the rest of Egypt. The Jews of Alexandria had indeed begun to be disenfranchised, when in 38 C.E., Flaccus, the governor, had declared them “foreigners” in a city they could not claim anymore to be *idia*, their own.

The worst, however, was yet to come: in 115, the Jews of Cyrenaica had rebelled, launching a messianic war, and expecting, it would seem, the eschatological return of the Diaspora Jews to the Holy Land.¹² The Alexandrian community was soon engulfed in the violence, in a battle

⁹ G. G. Stroumsa, “Alexandria and the Myth of Multiculturalism,” in *Origeniana Octava*, ed. L. Perrone (Leuven, 2003), I, 24–9.

¹⁰ See J. Rowlandson and A. Harker, “Roman Alexandria from the Perspective of the Papyri,” in *Alexandria, Real and Imagined*, eds. A. Hirst and M. Silk (Burlington, 2004), 79–112, esp. 100–2.

¹¹ Josephus, *War*, II. 487–9.

¹² Eusebius, *HE* IV.2.3–4. On some consequences of the revolt, see D. Frankfurter, “Lest Egypt’s City be Deserted: Religion and Ideology in the Egyptian Response to the Jewish Revolt (116–177 C.E.),” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 43 (1992): 203–20.

lost in advance. Indeed, the revolt ended in a bloodbath, and Appian tells us that "Trajan exterminated the Jews of Egypt."¹³

After the tragic events of 115–117, both intellectuals and fanatics disappeared from the community, but the community itself does not seem to have quite evaporated. In any case, this date represents the parting of the ways for Jews and Christians in Alexandria. While the earliest Christian community was most probably one of Jewish-Christians, retaining close contacts with the Jerusalem community, a strong anti-Jewish sentiment is clearly detectable in the few documents coming from Alexandrian Christianity after 117.¹⁴ The *Epistle of Barnabas*, probably written in 130–132, rejects the idea of a covenant between God and Israel. The Gnostic thinker Basilides (*floruit* 120–150), on his side, whom one might call the first Christian philosopher, argues that the archon whom Israel considers his god intended to submit all peoples to himself, i.e., to the Jews, thereby leading to a general revolt of the other archons against him.¹⁵ The virulence of Basilides's theological or metaphysical anti-Semitism cannot fully be explained solely on the basis of references to social frictions between Jews and Christians in early second-century Alexandria. Something else is at work here, a deep ambivalence that transcends social conditions and the tense relations between two urban groups.¹⁶ To my mind, this virulence, which we shall meet again in later antiquity, is characteristic of Alexandria, and should be understood as reflecting the cumulated accretions of Egyptian, Greek, and Christian hostility to Jews.¹⁷ The lack of Judaizing tendencies in later Alexandrian Christianity, in contradistinction with trends observable elsewhere, is moreover noticeable.

One then hears very little about the weakened Jewish community in Alexandria until the end of the third century. In the fourth century it reappears again, but this time the synagogue has replaced the *politeuma*

¹³ *exollynta to en Aigyptōi Ioudaiōn genos* (*Civil Wars*, II.13.90).

¹⁴ See J. Carleton Paget, "Jews and Christians in Ancient Alexandria from the Ptolemies to Caracalla," in *Alexandria, Real and Imagined*, eds. A. Hirst and M. Silk, 143–66, esp. 157.

¹⁵ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.24.4; cf. Hippolytus, *Elenchos* VII.25.4. See G. G. Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy: the Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (Tübingen, 1999), 246.

¹⁶ See G. G. Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy*, 246.

¹⁷ See P. Schaefer, *Judaeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1997), for instance 166 and 176, where he clearly refers to a particularly virulent anti-Semitic tradition in Alexandria. See also Starobinski-Safran, "La communauté juive d'Alexandrie", 63ff.

as its dominant institution. As far as I know, however, there are no archaeological remains of Alexandrian synagogues. A small number of Hebrew papyri and inscriptions have been found, but they tell us much less than we would like to know.¹⁸ From them it appears that leaders of Jewish communities in the *Chora* could correspond in Hebrew, rather than in Greek. To some extent, then, this phenomenon, which seems to gain momentum in the late fourth century, attests to a process of Hebraization of the Egyptian Jewish communities, a process reflecting a growing Palestinian influence, as already noted by Victor Tcherikover.¹⁹ There had always been close contacts between Egyptian and Palestinian Jews. The phenomenon is not attested for Alexandria, but it is quite plausible that it occurred there too. A few rabbis from Alexandria active in Palestine in the late Roman period are attested in Talmudic literature.²⁰ The phenomenon still has to be explained. A plausible direction (although the dearth of evidence only permits speculation) would be to interpret this Hebraization as reflecting the coming to the fore of the Rabbinical class in early Byzantine Palestine, from the fourth to the sixth century, at the precise time of the increasing Christianization of the Land (and of the Empire) and of the corresponding social marginalization and legal disenfranchising of the Jews. It is, precisely, this marginalization of the Jews that explains the strengthening of the Rabbis' leadership position—a thesis convincingly argued by Seth Schwartz.²¹ Such a profound cultural change in Jewish communities, then, can be best understood as a reaction to a new situation: the more the Jews felt marginalized, the easier it was for them to insist on particularistic aspects of their identity, such as the use of Hebrew as a Jewish *lingua franca*. Having lost various aspects of their previous citizenship, the Jews strengthened their self-definition as a religious community.²²

The late fourth century, however, also saw the dramatic transformation of the relations between Christians and pagans in Alexandria,

¹⁸ See D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Cambridge, 1992).

¹⁹ Short discussion in C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, 1997), ch. 4: "The Jewish Community," 91–127 and notes, esp. 120.

²⁰ For instance Palestinian Talmud, *Hagiga* 3.1; *Avot* 4.11.

²¹ S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E.–640 C.E.* (Princeton, 2001).

²² See G. G. Stroumsa, "Religious Dynamics between Christians and Jews in Late Antiquity," in *Cambridge History of Christianity, 300–600 A.D.*, eds. A. Casiday and F. Norris (Cambridge, 2007), 151–72.

from which attitudes to the Jews cannot be quite disconnected. The most violent clash between pagans and Christians is probably the conflict over the Serapeum, which ended with its destruction in 391. The succession of events seems to have been as follows:

On 16 June 391, Theodosius addressed to Evagrius, the Prefect, and to Romanus, the Count of Egypt, an edict forbidding sacrifices and the access to temples in Egypt. When, encouraged by the Imperial precept, the Christians desecrated cultic objects in the basilica, the pagans reacted violently. The Christians, helped by soldiers, destroyed the statue of the god and burnt it, piece by piece, in different places of the city. In a second stage, the soldiers destroyed the temples and looted them. Similar reports on the destruction of pagan sanctuaries (for instance that of Osiris in Canope) highlight the role of bishops and monks in the wave of violence. The end of public pagan cults in Egypt had a symbolic meaning, even more for the pagans than for the Christians: Egypt had been abandoned by the gods.²³

The expulsion of the Jews from Alexandria twenty-four years after the destruction of the Serapeum is not a surprising event. As no serious threat was perceived any longer to be coming from the pagans, the intensity of the anti-Jewish animus grew. The Jews were now endowed, in popular Christian consciousness, with some of the characteristics previously attributed to the pagans. The church had now become the locus of the opposition to Judaism in Alexandria. As noted by Christopher Haas in an excellent chapter in his *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, the demise of paganism, or at least of the most obvious and public forms of paganism, transformed the Jewish community into the only major group in the city challenging the complete hegemony of the Church and of the Patriarch.²⁴

The best documented chapter in the history of the relationships between Christians and Jews in Late Antique Alexandria is the story, related by Socrates Scholasticus (d. after 439), of the violent argument between the Jews and Cyril, the newly appointed Patriarch, an argument which culminated with Cyril's expulsion of the Jews from the city in 415.²⁵

²³ See esp. F. Thélamon, *Paiens et chrétiens au IV^e siècle: l'apport de l'"Histoire ecclésiastique" de Rufin d'Aquilée* (Paris, 1981), 255–63.

²⁴ Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 126.

²⁵ Text in G. C. Hansen, ed. (GCS, NF 1). Translation A. C. Zenos in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* 2, 2, 158–60.

In his *Ecclesiastical History* (VII. 13), Socrates reports in great detail about the way in which the Jews were driven out of Alexandria by Cyril. Socrates, one should note, lived in Constantinople and had little sympathy for Alexandrians—a fact which warns us to read his reports cautiously. He starts by noticing the well-known proclivity of Alexandrians for urban violence. Alexandria is a city in which arguments between communities rarely end without bloodshed. Now the Jews, who do not work on the Sabbath, prefer to spend their free time going to theater and choreographic productions than listening to the weekly reading of the Torah in the synagogue. Since such spectacles attract great crowds, “disorder is almost invariably produced.” Orestes, the prefect, had published a decree seeking to regulate dance productions. A certain Hierax, a teacher close to Cyril’s inner circle, who attended such an event in order to report on it, was identified by the Jews as being an *agent provocateur*. Orestes, worried by the growing power wielded by Cyril, tended to support the Jews’ claims, and had Hierax arrested. Cyril, in his turn, threatened the leaders of the Jewish community. In response, the Jews planned a night attack on the Christians, and let the rumor circulate that the Alexander church had caught fire. When the Christians ran to save the church, the Jewish crowd (*plēthos*) “immediately fell upon and slew them.” (The Jews identified one another by a special ring made of the bark of a palm branch). This was too much for Cyril, who took advantage of the events to achieve his goal: rendering his city *Judenrein*, after having destroyed the pagan cults. He led a crowd to the synagogue, drove the Jews out, and expelled them from the city altogether, authorizing the looting of their property. Orestes, realizing at once the tragedy that meant for the city, wrote to the emperor. Cyril too sent the emperor a letter in which he justified his actions by the “outrageous conduct of the Jews.” The open conflict between Prefect and Patriarch could not be healed: Orestes refused to recant in front of the copy of the Gospels which Cyril handed him. Cyril now made use of the ultimate weapon: he brought the monks of Nitria to Alexandria, where they managed to wound Orestes during a stone-throwing demonstration. Soon afterwards, the animosity between the two was rekindled by the murder of Hypatia, a murder from which Cyril can in no way be considered innocent.

Maria Dzielska, indeed, concludes her careful investigation of the murder with the recognition that Cyril had been a chief instigator of

the campaign of defamation against Hypatia.²⁶ Both the destruction of the Sarapeum and the murder of Hypatia have had a more powerful impact throughout the centuries than the expulsion of the Jews: after all, the last event has recurred too many times in history, before and after the Alexandrian Patriarch's deed, to leave a striking mark in cultural memory. It may well be that Socrates, in his strong dislike of Cyril, overplayed his hand, adding to his story (which is no testimony) some dubious details. This, however, does not change the picture in its broad lines. The three events should be seen as a sequence, and within the same perspective: the chain of events which leads from religious intolerance to racism, and to the hatred of free thought and of ideas in general, in particular if they are proclaimed by women. Such chains of events, in late antique Alexandria as elsewhere and in other times, usually end in blood.

Salo W. Baron, the first Jewish historian to propose an alternative cultural and social history to the traditional perception of Jewish history, which he qualified as "lachrymose," speaks of Cyril's expulsion of the Jews as "the first expulsion of Jews from a city in history."²⁷ This is not quite correct. At least twice, and perhaps three or four times, the Jews had previously been expelled from Rome: in 139 B.C.E., by the praetor responsible for foreigners; in 19 C.E., by Tiberius; and also, perhaps, in 41 and 49, by Claudius. True, this was the first time they were expelled by a Christian leader. Baron's assessment of Cyril's act, however, remains uncontroversial: it would not bode well for future relations between Jews and Christians. One should also note that in the ancient world, the expulsion of a population was often, to some extent, a symbolic act, which meant the expulsion of the community leaders, while simple people would not be uprooted. This may go a long way in explaining the puzzling fact of the Jews' constant reappearance on the scene in Alexandria, after each "expulsion."

²⁶ M. Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria*, transl. F. Lyra (Cambridge, 1995), 97. On Hypatia, see also E. J. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (Berkeley, 2006), 187–203. On Cyril and the Jews, see also Watts, *City and School*, 197–8.

²⁷ S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, II (New York, 1952). I quote according to the French translation, *Histoire d'Israël, vie sociale et religieuse* (Paris, 1957), 846–7.

Cyril was not the only intellectual of his generation to show a strong dislike of Jews. Synesius (c. 365–413/4), a pupil of Hypatia who stemmed from a noble Hellenic family from Cyrenaica, reveals a similar attitude towards them in a letter to his brother, where he describes a sea trip from Alexandria to Cyrene. The captain of the ship and at least six of the twelve crew members, who may have come from Alexandria, were Jewish. Synesius expresses his disgust at the captain's meticulous observance of the Sabbath laws, when "the Maccabean" leaves the rudder on Friday evening, returning to his task only when convinced that the ship is in real danger: "For now, he said, we are clearly in danger of death, and the law commands." Synesius offers this comment: "The Jews (here: *hoi ioudaioi*; elsewhere, *to hebraion genos*) consider it an expression of piety to cause the deaths of as many Greeks as possible." According to Menahem Stern, this is "one of the most extreme statements of Jewish misanthropy to be made in Antiquity."²⁸

In any case, Jewish history in late antiquity struck Alexandrian and Egyptian Christians as particularly sad and lachrymose. In one of his letters, Isidore of Pelusium, who died around the mid-fifth century, wrote:

If you want to know the punishments which befell the criminal Jews who released their rage against Christ, do read Josephus's history of captivity; although a Jew, he is a friend of truth. You will thus know a divine punishment unique in human history. In order that no one remain unbelieving in front of their unbelievable and stunning tragedies, it was not someone belonging to another nation (one would most probably not have believed him) but someone from their own nation, a zealot, even, whom truth entrusted with the task of telling the tragic history of their extraordinary suffering.²⁹

Elsewhere, Isidore compares the punishment of the Jews to that of the Sodomites: while the Sodomites were burnt by fire, the Jews suffered from war and hunger, thrown into such poverty that they eventually ate their own children (Letter 1509; 182–183 SC).

Even after their expulsion by Cyril, however, the Jews returned once more to Alexandria. Leontius, bishop of Neapolis in Cyprus in the early seventh century, who knew Egypt well, wrote in his "Life of

²⁸ M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, III (Jerusalem, 1984), 49–50. Text, translation and commentary, 48–58.

²⁹ *ta allokota ekeina ektragōidēsai pathē*, Letter 1692, To Adamantios, in P. Evieux, ed., transl., Isidore de Péluse, *Lettres*, II (SC 454 ; Paris: Le Cerf, 2000), 454–5.

St. John the Almsgiver," that many Jews had settled in Alexandria. It may well have been in Alexandria, writes N. H. Baynes, that Leontius composed his lost *Apology* against the Jews.³⁰ Another testimony from the last days of Byzantine rule in Egypt comes from the Palestinian monk John Moschus. In his *Pratum Spirituale*, Moschus tells us that when in Alexandria (around 578–590), he used to pay daily visits to Cosmas, a *scholasticus* who possessed a large library. Moschus "always found him either reading or writing against the Jews, for he was passionately desirous to convert them to the truth. And he often sent me to the Jews that I might discuss with them on the evidence of the Scripture."³¹

Marcel Simon's remark about Patristic anti-Jewish polemical literature can be quoted in the present context: "S'acharne-t-on avec une telle obstination sur un cadavre?" (Would one hound a corpse with such obstinacy?) Indeed, even the few testimonies that we are able to collect are enough to let us realize that the Jews, who for all practical purposes had disappeared from Alexandria for approximately two centuries, had returned in significant numbers, and constituted in the early fifth century a highly visible community, to come back once more after their expulsion by Cyril in the early fifth century.

When the conquering Arabs reached Alexandria, they seem to have found there a prospering Jewish community. In his *Kitāb al Intissar*, Ibn Dikmak Ibrahim ibn Muhammad writes that they found there 40,000—or even perhaps 70,000 Jews, who were paying the head tax (*jizyyah*).³² One is entitled to cast some doubt upon the veracity of such numbers. In any case, it is certainly significant that in the eyes of the conquerors, the Jewish community appeared to be quite prominent, both in numbers and in its economic status.

In his *Chronicle*, written in Greek in the second half of the seventh century (although it is extant only in Geez), John of Nikiu testifies that "the Jews were to be permitted to remain in the city of Alexandria" according to Patriarch Cyrus's agreement with 'Amr. (ch. 120, 22). Elsewhere in the same *Chronicle*, he knows of a certain Aubaruns, a Jew who possesses a chest in which he keeps the *mandil* and towel of

³⁰ N. H. Baynes, "The Icons before Iconoclasm," in his *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 230; originally published in *Harvard Theological Review* 44 (1951): 93–106.

³¹ Chapter 172, PG 87.3, 3040D, quoted by Baynes, *op. cit.*

³² ed. Beirut, II, 125. My thanks to Miriam Fraenkel for providing this reference.

Jesus. The Jew goes to Patriarch Timothy, who opens the chest. The Jew, of course, eventually converts (ch. 91).³³

The Arab conquest, then, did not put an end to the existence of the Jewish community in Alexandria, but it did transform its linguistic identity. From now on, our documentation is mainly in Arabic, or rather, in the Judeo-Arabic of the Cairo Genizah documents.³⁴ To be sure, medieval Alexandria remained in the shadow of Cairo, but we possess enough documentation (analyzed in Miriam Fraenkel's dissertation at the Hebrew University) to permit the assessment that the community remained very active in business and commerce. This, however, is another chapter.

The Arabic chapter in the history of the Alexandrian Jewish community would only end in 1956, with the expulsion of the Jews and of the Greeks, together with all foreign nationals, from Gamal Abd Al Nasser's Egypt.

The Bible demands of Israelites to love the stranger in their midst, as they too had once been strangers in Egypt. Emperor Claudius, then, reminded the Alexandrian Jews in 41 C.E. that they were living in a city that they could not consider as truly their own (*en allotreiai polei*).³⁵ Saint Cyril, who could comment so brilliantly on the literary masterpiece of Alexandrian Judaism, did not hesitate to expel the Jews from the city. And now, Nasser. Jewish destiny in Alexandria seems to have come full circle. Mummified behind its heavy police belt, the great synagogue, or rather its nineteenth-century avatar, is empty, left as it was in November 1956. It is hard to imagine yet another return of the Jews to Alexandria.

In a spirited essay, Raymond Klibansky suggested recognizing in Alexandria the key of our own reclaiming of the classical heritage: "Regagner Athènes par Alexandrie."³⁶ Klibansky's intuition can also be extended: it is through late antique Alexandria that Greek wisdom

³³ See discussion in J. Starr, "Byzantine Jewry on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (565–638)," *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 15 (1935): 280–93, esp. 281–2.

³⁴ See A. L. Udovitch, "Medieval Alexandria: Some Evidence from the Cairo Genizah Documents," in *Alexandria and Alexandrianism* (Malibu, 1996), 273–83.

³⁵ See discussion in J. Carleton Paget, "Jews and Christians," 148.

³⁶ "Regagner Athènes à partir d'Alexandrie?," C. Jacob, *Entretien avec Raymond Klibansky*, in *Alexandrie, III^e siècle av. J.-C.*, eds. C. Jacob and F. de Polignac (Paris, 1992), 231–45.

reached Baghdad, and it is through the city that Jewish wisdom, as exemplified in Philo, and Christianized in the Alexandrian Church Fathers, became the backbone of the Western intellectual tradition until Spinoza cut the magic knot. Until him, indeed, the path from Athens to Jerusalem passed through Alexandria.

THE JEWS IN BYZANTINE SOUTHERN ITALY

Vera von Falkenhausen

Over the more than 500-year period between the mid-sixth and the end of the eleventh century, various regions of Italy belonged to the Byzantine Empire, though not all at the same time. The Emperor Justinian I recovered Italy from the Ostrogoths during the Gothic War (535–554), but a few decades later the Lombards invaded and occupied extended territories from the north to the south. At the end of the seventh century, only the Exarchate of Ravenna, Rome, Sicily, parts of Calabria, and some ports in Campania and Apulia were still part of the Empire. In 751 Ravenna succumbed to the Lombards, and some decades later Rome and Campania to the Carolingians; during the ninth century Sicily was conquered by the Arabs, but during the last thirty years of the same century Basil I recovered Apulia and Calabria from the Lombards and Arabs. These regions belonged to the Empire until the second half of the eleventh century, when they were conquered by the Normans.

When the Byzantines regained Italy during the Gothic War, significant Jewish communities in the peninsula had been in existence for more than 500 years. They are best known from funerary inscriptions in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew (many of them bilingual) dating from antiquity to the early Middle Ages¹ and from objects decorated with Jewish symbols or Hebrew letters. Even though the majority of these inscriptions can be dated only approximately, many inscriptions provide insights into the social and religious order of the communities with their *gerousiarchai*, *archisynagogoi*,² *apostuli*, and *rebbites*. According

¹ A. E. Felle, "Ebraismo e cristianesimo alla luce della documentazione epigrafica (III–VII secolo)," *La parola del passato* 353 (2007): 148–84. B. Rochette, "Le bilinguisme gréco-latin dans les communautés juives d'Italie d'après les inscriptions (III^e–VI^e s.)," in *Bilinguisme gréco-latin et épigraphie. Actes du colloque organisé à l'Université Lumière—Lyon 2, Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée—Jean Poilloux, UMR 5189 Hisoma et JE 2409 Romanitas, les 17, 18 et 19 mai 2004*, eds., F. Biville, J.-C. Decourt, G. Rougemont (Lyon, 2008), 273–304.

² T. Rajak and D. Noy, "Archisynagogoi: Office, Title and Social Status in the Greco-Jewish Synagogue," *Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993): 75–93.

to Jewish tradition transmitted by various mediaeval texts, these communities dated from the time when the Emperor Titus brought Jewish prisoners of war to Italy after the destruction of the Second Temple; Jews, however, had been living in Italy even before then. The largest community, attested by about 600 inscriptions, must have been established in Rome and its ports Ostia and Porto.³ The synagogue of Ostia underwent major renovation in the fourth century and was abandoned during the fifth, in the period of general decline of the city.⁴ In this context it may be worth mentioning the *Actus Silvestri*, a hagiographic legend about Pope Silvester I (314–335), written in Rome at the end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century. Part of this text, which had an enormous diffusion during the Middle Ages in the Latin original as well as the Greek translation, presents a long and articulate religious discussion between the saintly pope and twelve rabbis in the presence of Constantine and his mother Helena. Even though the text of this *altercatio* is directed to Christian readers and the various topics of discussion are ultimately inspired by arguments raised within the various Christian communities,⁵ I think it is significant that the Roman author decided to present it in the form of a dispute with a large gathering of learned rabbis.

Jewish inscriptions have been found all over Italy, more in the southern than in the northern region, especially in the coastal cities (Naples,⁶ Vibo Valentia,⁷ Reggio,⁸ Leucopetra⁹ e Bova Marina, where the ruins of a synagogue active between the second and the sixth

³ J.-B. Frey, *Corpus inscriptionum Iudaicarum. Recueil des inscriptions juives qui vont du III^e siècle avant Jésus-Christ au VII^e siècle de notre ère*, I. Europe (Città del Vaticano, 1936), no. 1–551; D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe*, II. *The City of Rome* (Cambridge, 1995); P. A. Bengtson, "Semitic Inscriptions in Rome," in *The Synagogue of Ancient Ostia and the Jews of Rome. Interdisciplinary Studies*, eds., B. Olsson, D. Mitternacht and O. Brandt, in *Acta Instituti Romani Regni Sueciae*, ser. in 4^o, LVII (Stockholm, 2001), 151–65.

⁴ A. Runesson, "The Synagogue at Ancient Ostia: The Building and its History," in *The Synagogue of Ancient Ostia*, 83; D. Pacchiani, "Le origini della presenza ebraica a Roma e nel Lazio," in *La presenza ebraica a Roma e nel Lazio. Dalle origini al ghetto* (Padova, 2009), 13–87.

⁵ T. Canella, *Gli 'Actus Silvestri'. Genesi di una leggenda su Costantino imperatore* (Spoleto, 2006), 179–309.

⁶ D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe*, I: Italy (excluding the city of Rome), (Cambridge, 1993), no. 25–37.

⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 138.

⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 139.

⁹ F. Costabile, "Testimonianze paleocristiane e giudaiche da Leucopetra," *Rivista storica calabrese*, n. s. 9 (1988): 255–265.

centuries have been excavated,¹⁰ Taranto,¹¹ Otranto,¹² Brindisi,¹³ and Bari)¹⁴ and in places near the major roads such as Fondi,¹⁵ Capua,¹⁶ and especially Venosa, an important town at the junction of the via Appia with the main public road from Calabria.¹⁷ In Late Antiquity, Jewish communities must have been particularly important in Apulia. According to a constitution of the Emperor Honorius, who in 398 abrogated a previous law according to which Jews were freed from curial obligations, the exemption of people *Iudaicae superstitionis* had seriously damaged the economy of the towns of Apulia and Calabria (Cod. Theod. XII, 1, 158).¹⁸ Moreover, the *Sefer Yuhasin* and some later manuscripts of the *Sefer Josefon* report that some 5000 of the Jewish prisoners brought by Titus to Italy were settled in Oria, Otranto, Taranto, and other Apulian cities.¹⁹

Most of the Jewish catacombs and inscriptions from Sicily are found in coastal towns such as Taormina, Acireale, Catania, Syracuse, Caucana, Agrigento, Lilibeo ed Erice, and on the islands of Lipari and Malta; but they are also present in the grain-growing hinterland in such places as

¹⁰ L. Costamagna, "La sinagoga di Bova Marina nel quadro degli insediamenti taroantichi della costa ionica meridionale della Calabria," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 103-2 (1991): 611-30; Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, I, no. 140; C. Colafemmina, "Gli ebrei nella Calabria meridionale," in *Calabria cristiana. Società, religione, cultura nel territorio della Diocesi di Oppido Mamertino-Palmi* (Soveria Mannelli, 1999), 162-4.

¹¹ Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, I, no. 118-133; C. Colafemmina, *Gli Ebrei a Taranto. Fonti documentarie* (Bari, 2005), [Società di storia patria per la Puglia. Documenti e monografie, 52], 28-44.

¹² Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, I, no. 134; C. Colafemmina, "Di una iscrizione greco-ebraica di Otranto," *Vetera christianorum* 12 (1975): 131-7.

¹³ C. Colafemmina, "Insediamenti e condizione degli Ebrei nell'Italia meridionale e insulare," in *Gli Ebrei nell'Alto Medioevo*, I (Spoleto, 1980) [Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, XXVI, 30 marzo-5 aprile 1978], 220.

¹⁴ Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, I, no. 135-136; C. Colafemmina, "L'insediamento ebraico," in *Archeologia di una città. Bari dalle origini al X secolo*, eds., G. Andreassi and F. Radina (Bari, 1988), 513-21.

¹⁵ Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, I, no. 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 42-116; C. Colafemmina, "Gli ebrei fra Tarda Antichità e Medioevo," in *Storia della Basilicata*, 2. *Il Medioevo*, ed., C. D. Fonseca (Bari, 2006), 309-19.

¹⁸ The Roman province Calabria is not identical with the homonymous region of modern Italy, but corresponds to the southern part of Apulia.

¹⁹ R. Bonfil, ed., *The Chronicle of Ahima'az* (Leiden, 2009) (Studies in Jewish History and Culture, eds., H. Tirosh-Samuelson and G. Veltri, 22), 234; Colafemmina, *Gli Ebrei a Taranto*, 7f.

Lentini, Comiso, Sofiana (Piazza Armerina), and Palazzolo Acreide.²⁰ The epigraphical evidence gives the impression that the Jews of Sicily were particularly involved in the transportation of the *annona* from the island to Rome. In fact, Jews and Samaritans appear to have formed special units within the *corpora naviculariorum* (Cod. Theod. XIII, 5, 18).²¹

This aspect of their activities is confirmed by Procopius's description of the Byzantine siege of Naples in 536. On this occasion the Jews promised to provide everything necessary for the nourishment of the population in the besieged town (Procopius, *Bella*, V, viii, 41). Likewise, during the last days of Gothic resistance, they stubbornly defended the city walls facing the sea (*ibid.* V, x, 24f.). Their decision to join the Gothic cause against the imperial invaders may have been prompted by the measures restricting the practice of their religion imposed by Justinian's recent novel 37, "De Africana Ecclesia." Published on August 1, 535, just after the defeat of the Vandals, this decree proclaimed that: *Iudaeis insuper denegamus servos habere Christianos, quod et legibus anterioribus cavetur et nobis cordi est illibatum custodire, ut neque servos orthodoxae religionis habeant neque, si forte catechumenos accipiant, eos audeant circumcidere. Sed neque synagogas eorum stare concedimus, sed ad ecclesiarum figuram eas volumus reformari. Neque enim Iudaeos neque paganos neque Donatistas neque Arianos neque alios quoscumque haereticos vel speluncas habere vel quaedam quasi ritu ecclesiastico facere patimur, cum hominibus impiis sacra peragenda permittere satis absurdum est.*²² Thus Jews had good

²⁰ C. Colafemmina, "Ipogei ebraici in Sicilia," in *Italia Judaica. Gli ebrei in Sicilia sino all'espulsione del 1492. Atti del V convegno internazionale (Palermo, 15-19 giugno 1992)*, (Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato. Saggi 32), (Roma, 1995), 304-29; Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, I, no. 143-167; L. V. Rutgers "Interaction and Its Limits: Some Notes on the Jews of Sicily in Late Antiquity," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 115 (1997): 245-56; Id., "Gli ebrei in Sicilia nel tardoantico," in *Ebrei e Sicilia*, eds., N. Bucaria, M. Luzzati and A. Tarantino (Palermo, 2002), 43-52; S. Simonsohn, "Epigrafia ebraica in Sicilia," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, s. IV, Quaderni 2 (1999): 509-29.

²¹ Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, 1987), 182, 184; C. Gebbia, "Gli Ebrei nell'impero cristiano. Tolleranza e intolleranza," *Opus 2* (2000): 171.

²² Linder, *The Jews*, 381-9. trans., p. 386: We do not allow the Jews, furthermore, to have christian slaves; for they have been warned of this in previous laws, and it is our intention to observe it undiminished, that they shall not have slaves of Orthodox religion, and if they happen to receive catechumens they shall not dare to circumcise them. Yet we do not grant that their synagogues shall stand, but want them to be converted in form to churches. We do not suffer the Jews, the pagans, the Donatists, the

reason to fear that the Byzantine conquest of Italy might worsen their social and religious status.

A similar geographical pattern of Jewish settlement in southern Italy emerges from the letters of Pope Gregory I (590–604). During his pontificate most of the inland territory of Italy was occupied by the Lombards, and places like Venosa, with the greatest number of early medieval Jewish inscriptions, were no longer under Byzantine control. In Gregory's *Registrum epistularum* Jewish and Samaritan communities are mentioned in Terracina,²³ Naples,²⁴ Cagliari,²⁵ and Sicily, especially in Catania,²⁶ Messina,²⁷ Syracuse,²⁸ Agrigento,²⁹ and Palermo.³⁰ The papal correspondence provides interesting and apparently quite reliable insights into the economic activities of southern Italian Jews, demonstrating the enormous social and religious pressure to which they were subjected after the Byzantine reconquest.

For example, the *Registrum epistularum* refers to Jewish merchants,³¹ some of whom were particularly active in the slave trade with southern France.³² They provided a rare merchandise to Italian land owners and Byzantine officials, since many slaves had escaped or had been captured during the continuous wars with the Lombards. This business, however, had become quite risky and frustrating since by law Jews

Ariens, or all other heretics either to have caves or perform as though in an ecclesiastical rite, for it is perfectly absurd to permit impious men to deal with sacred matters.

²³ D. Norberg, ed., *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistolarum* (Turnhout, 1982) (Corpus christianorum. Series Latina 140) I, 34, p. 42, II, 45, p. 137. (English translation: *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, translated with Introduction and Notes by J. Martyn, I–III (Tornoto, 2004) [Medieval Sources in Translation 40], I, pp. 155, 226f.). Terracina was an important *statio* of the Appian way on the route from Rome to Naples and Sicily: S. Crogiez, "Les stations du cursus publicus de Rome à Terracina," in *La via Appia* (Roma, 1990) (Quaderni del Centro di studio per l'archeologia etrusco-italica, 18), 95–103; A. Esch, *Römische Straßen in ihrer Landschaft* (Mainz, 1997), 18–20; V. von Falkenhausen, "Réseaux routiers et ports dans l'Italie méridionale byzantine (VI^e–XI^e s.)," in 'Η καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο. Πρακτικά τού Α' Διεθνούς Συμποσίου (Αθήνα, 15–17 σεπτ. 1988) (Αθήνα, 1989), 724f.

²⁴ *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistolarum*, VI, 29, pp. 401f., IX, 105, pp. 658f. (Engl. trans.: II, pp. 424, 605f.).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 9, p. 226, IX, 196, pp. 750f. (Engl. trans.: I, p. 294; II, pp. 662f.).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, 30, p. 402f. (Engl. trans.: II, pp. 424f.).

²⁷ *Ibid.* VII, 41, p. 505 (Engl. trans.: II, p. 496).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, VIII, 21, p. 540f. (Engl. trans.: II, p. 517).

²⁹ *Ibid.* VIII, 23, pp. 543f. (Engl. trans.: II, pp. 518f.).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, VIII, 25, pp. 546f., IX, 38, p. 597, IX, 40, pp. 598f. (Engl. trans.: II, p. 521).

³¹ *Ibid.*, I, 45, p. 59, I, 66, pp. 75f., IX, 40, pp. 598f. (Engl. trans.: I, pp. 171, 182; II, pp. 529f.).

³² *Ibid.*, IX, 105, pp. 658f. (Engl. trans.: II, pp. 605f.).

were not allowed to own Christian slaves and had to release those who were willing to convert to Christianity;³³ thus some Neapolitan Jews appealed to the pope to intervene on their behalf with the local ecclesiastical authorities.³⁴ The safest way for the Jewish merchants to proceed was to have their sons baptized and transfer the slaves to them.³⁵

The pope's main interest was to convert the Jews to Christianity. Officially he disapproved of the fact that in southern France they had been "brought to the baptismal font more by force than by preaching" *vi magis ad fontem baptismatis quam predicatione perductos*.³⁶ On the other hand, he wrote to the *rector patrimonii Siciliensis* (rector of the Sicilian patrimony) asking him to alleviate the corvées and taxes of those Jews living and working on the Sicilian *patrimonia Petri* who decided to convert to Christianity. Knowing that the first generation of new Christians might not excel in fervor for their new religion, the pope put his hope in their descendents who would be more steady in their Christian faith. He added quite realistically: "Nor are we doing this unprofitably, if by relieving their tax burden we bring them to the grace of Christ. For although they themselves come to us with little faith, even so these who are born from them can now be baptized with greater faith. Our profit, therefore, is either themselves or their children." *Nec hoc inutiliter facimus, si pro levandis pensionis oneribus eos ad Christi gratiam perducamus, quia, etsi ipsi minus fideliter veniunt, hi tamen qui de eis nati fuerint iam fidelius baptizantur. Aut ipsos ergo aut eorum filios lucratur.*³⁷ Similarly he wrote to the *defensor* (defender of the Sicilian patrimony) Fantinus in Agrigento, granting permission that those who desired to convert might receive baptism as soon as possible (instead of waiting for Easter, as tradition prescribed), and bestowing upon the poorer aspirants a new garment for the celebration of baptism.³⁸

Several times the pope responded to the appeal of Jews whose synagogues had been confiscated by the local bishop, as in Terracina and

³³ Linder, *The Jews*, 370f., 375–381. This aspect is mentioned in many letters: *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistolarum*, III, 37, pp. 182f., IV, 9, p. 226, 21, p. 239, VI, 29, pp. 401f., VII, 21, p. 472, IX, 214, pp. 774, IX, 216, p. 779. (Engl. trans.: I, pp. 260, 294, 303; II, pp. 424, 472, 678, 681).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, IX, 105, pp. 658f. (Engl. trans.: II, pp. 605f.).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII, 21, pp. 540f., IX, 105, pp. 658f. (Engl. trans.: II, pp. 517, 605f.).

³⁶ *Ibid.* I, 45, p. 59. (Engl. trans.: I, p. 171).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 7, p. 273. (Engl. trans.: II, pp. 327f.).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, VIII, 23, pp. 543f. (Engl. trans.: II, pp. 518f.).

Palermo.³⁹ In these cases he apparently tried to intercede on behalf of the Jewish community, since according to Roman law the Jews were allowed to keep synagogues they already owned, but not to build new ones.⁴⁰ In another instance the pope urged the bishop of Cagliari to restore to the Jewish community its synagogue where Peter, a newly baptized Jew, had deposited an icon of the Virgin, a crucifix, and the garment he had worn for baptism,⁴¹ probably with the intention of transforming the place into a church.

The most important source for Italian history at the end of antiquity and the early Middle Ages, Gregory's *Registrum epistularum*, provides a vivid picture of the situation of Jews in Byzantine southern Italy. There were still numerous wealthy Jewish communities, but they were under strong pressure to convert to Christianity. The prohibition against owning Christian slaves seems to have been an effective means of prompting members of the Jewish upper class to seek baptism, while peasants and members of the lower class were motivated by gifts and the alleviation of taxes and corvées.

Although the Jewish problem is a prominent topic in Gregory's correspondence,⁴² his *Dialogi*, a highly successful collection of edifying legends, contain only one miraculous story involving a Jew which, again, concerns conversion. During a trip along the Appian way from Campania to Rome, a Jew stayed overnight in a pagan temple close to Fondi.⁴³ Before going to sleep he took the precaution of making the sign of the cross, and thus during the night he was able to overhear the conversations of evil spirits boasting of their misdeeds. One of them told how he had made the bishop of Fondi fall in love with a nun, who now lived in his residence. In the morning the Jew went to see the bishop and confronted him with what he knew about his

³⁹ Ibid. I, 34, p. 42, II, 45, p. 137, VIII, 25, pp. 546f., IX, 38, p. 597. (Engl. trans.: I, pp. 155, 226f., II, pp. 521, 568f.).

⁴⁰ Linder, *The Jews*, 398–402.

⁴¹ *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistolarum*, IX, 196, pp. 750f. (Engl. trans.: II, pp. 662f.).

⁴² S. Boesch Gajano, "Per una storia degli Ebrei in Occidente tra Antichità e Medioevo. La testimonianza di Gregorio Magno," *Quaderni Medievali* 8 (1979): 26–43; E. Baltrusch, "Gregor der Große und sein Verhältnis zum römischen Recht am Beispiel seiner Politik gegenüber den Juden," *Historische Zeitschrift* 259 (1994): 39–58.

⁴³ A Jewish inscription from Fondi has come down to us, and the Jewish community of nearby Terracina is well attested: cf. notes 15, 23, 39.

inappropriate behaviour, whereupon the bishop dismissed the nun and the Jew was baptized.⁴⁴

Gregory did not invent this story; in fact, he used the plot of an edifying legend from *Collatio* VIII, 16 of John Cassian (published in 426), changing the geography and the associations of the main characters. In the *Collatio* the person who stays overnight in a lonely cave and overhears the evil demons boast of their seductive techniques is not a Jew, but a monk travelling through the desert of northern Egypt. The demon's victim, over the course of fifteen years, is not a bishop, but another monk known for his piety, who in the end decided not only to fornicate with a nun but also to marry her. Nor is the ending of the story in John Cassian a happy one. The monk sets out for Pelusium to warn his brother, but there he learns that in the same night when he overheard the demons the monk left his monastery to lead a sinful life with his girlfriend.⁴⁵ Thus Gregory has reused a well known story to promote his own aims: admonition of incontinent bishops and conversion of the Jews.

Gregory's death in 604 and the end of the *Registrum epistularum* mark a significant break in the documentation of early medieval Italian history. For the following two centuries the sources are scanty, and this also affects our knowledge of the Jewish communities. For instance, the conversion campaign of the Emperor Heraclius, whatever may have been its motivation, was prepared in western Europe by the councils of the Visigothic kings of Spain.⁴⁶ Waged in North Africa,⁴⁷ this campaign is mentioned by Pseudo-Fredgar in connection with the Merovingians,⁴⁸ but with the exception of two lines in the epitaph of Pope Honorius I (625–638): *Iudaicae gentis sub te est perfidia*

⁴⁴ Gregario Magno, *Storie di santi e diavoli (Dialoghi)*, vol. II. Testo critico e traduzione a cura di M. Simonetti, Commento a cura di S. Pricoco, III, 7 (Milano, 2006), 28–34. This story is dealt with also in G. Chiusano, "Gregorio Magno e le diocesi di Fondi, Terracina, Formia e Minturno," in *L'orbis christianus antiquus di Gregorio Magno.*, a cura di L. Ermini Pani, (Convegno di studi, Roma, 26–28 ottobre 2004) (Roma, 2007) (Miscellanea della Società Romana di Storia patria, 51), II, 439–44.

⁴⁵ M. Petschenig, ed., Cassianus, *Collationes*. Editio altera supplementis aucta curante G. Kreuz (Wien, 2004) (*Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 13), 231–3.

⁴⁶ E. A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford, 1969), 164–7.

⁴⁷ G. Dagron et V. Déroche, "Juifs et chrétiens dans l'Orient du VII^e siècle," *Travaux et mémoires* 11 (1991): 28–43.

⁴⁸ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredgar with its Continuations* (London, 1960), 53f.

victa/sic unum Domini reddis ovile pium,⁴⁹ there is no trace in the Italian sources. However, Heraclius's religious policies against Jews would appear to be reflected in two hagiographic texts from Sicily: the *Vita* of St Zosimus, bishop of Syracuse, the Byzantine capital of Sicily, for thirteen years sometime between 642 and 662,⁵⁰ and the *Passio* of the Lentini martyrs, Alphius, Philadelphus, and Cyrinus, who are said to have died under Licinius (fourth century).⁵¹

According to his *Vita*, St Zosimus was once asked by a Byzantine official to allow the Jews to rebuild their synagogue which had been damaged during a Vandal incursion. The bishop refused with the words of Psalm 139: 21: "Do not I hate them, o Lord, that hate Thee?" This anecdote, true or invented, belongs to the repertoire of case-histories pertaining to the law that forbade the building of new synagogues but allowed the reconstruction of old ones. A similar law seems also to have existed in Islamic countries.⁵²

The *Passio* of Alphius, Philadelphus, and Cyrinus mentions Jews as protagonists of the saints' miracles during their life and *post mortem*. When they were taken as prisoners through the Jewish quarter of Lentini (τῆς τῶν Ἰουδαίων κατοικίας), the saints healed a Jewish child possessed by an evil spirit, whereupon the whole family asked to be baptized and promised to renounce τὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων μονοθέλητον πίστιν.⁵³ The strange association of Judaism and Monothelism in this passage may be a reason to date its composition to the second half of the seventh century. The same date could be proposed for the more spectacular *post mortem* miracle in the *Passio*, since it presents

⁴⁹ L. Duchesne, ed., *Le 'Liber pontificalis'. Texte, introduction et commentaire* (Paris, 1952), 326.

⁵⁰ The text has been preserved only in a Latin translation: *Acta Sanctorum Martii III*, 839–43; A. Acconcia Longo, "La *Vita* di Zosimo vescovo di Siracusa: un esempio di 'agiografia storica'," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*, n. s. 36 (1999): 5–17; M. Re, "La *Vita* di Zosimo vescovo di Siracusa: qualche osservazione," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*, n. s. 37 (2000): 29–42; D. Motta, *Percorsi dell'agiografia, Società e cultura nella Sicilia tardoantica e bizantina* (Catania, 2004²), 173–87.

⁵¹ A discussion of the various historical and geographical contradictions and inconsistencies in the text can be found in Motta, *Percorsi dell'agiografia*, 305–23.

⁵² R. J. H. Gottheil, "An Eleventh-century Document Concerning the Cairo Synagogue," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 19 (1907): 467–539; S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, II. *The Community* (Berkeley, 1971), 143–5.

⁵³ *Acta Sanctorum*, Maii II, pp. *LVIII D–*LIX A; M. Re, *Il codice Lentinese dei santi Alfio, Filadelfo e Cirino. Studio paleografico e filologico*, [Istituto siciliano di studi bizantini e neoellenici. Quaderni 16] (Palermo, 2007), 55f.

Carthage, which had been conquered by the Arabs in 698, as a Byzantine town. In this lengthy narration Samuel, a wealthy Jew, chief of the Jewish community of Lentini, is suffering from leprosy. Healed by incubation at the tomb of the saints, he converts to Christianity and eventually convinces his sons, relatives, clients, and slaves to accept baptism. In the end, after a violent struggle between the Jews of the town who are desperate at being deprived of their religious leader, and the Christians, as many as 753 Jews convert to Christianity. They change their names, and Samuel and his sons and nephews become priests and deacons of the local church.⁵⁴

In the reign of Leo III (717–741), most of Italy had ceased to be part of the Byzantine Empire. This emperor's campaign against Jews was apparently intended to demonstrate that his Iconoclastic policies were not inspired by Jewish practice, as was generally considered by Iconodules.⁵⁵ The Roman Church did not accept the emperor's Iconoclastic decrees, though some influences of his anti-Jewish measures can be observed in Italy. The Roman synod of 743 prohibited marriages between Christians and Jews and confirmed the prohibition of the sale of Christian slaves to Jews.⁵⁶ There is also another very revealing hagiographic text: the *Life* of Leo, the bishop of Catania. According to the editor, Augusta Acconcia Longo, the protagonist was probably a contemporary of Gregory the Great whose *Bios*, originally written in an iconoclastic key, was later altered and is thus extant only in an incomplete version which concentrates on the miraculous deeds of a certain magician Heliodorus.⁵⁷ In our context it is most interesting that Heliodorus was lured into an agreement with the Devil through

⁵⁴ The text of the miracle is still unpublished, but an important commentary has been written by M. V. Strazzeri, "I Giudei di San Fratello," in "*Ubi neque aerugo neque tinea demolitur.*" *Studi in onore di Luigi Pellegrini per i suoi settanta anni*, a cura di M. G. Del Fuoco (Napoli, 2006), 646–89.

⁵⁵ A. Cameron, "Byzantines and Jews: Some Recent Work on Early Byzantium," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 267–70.

⁵⁶ Mansi XII, 384.

⁵⁷ A. Acconcia Longo, "La Vita di s. Leone vescovo di Catania e gli incantesimi del mago Eliodoro," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*, n. s. 26 (1989): 3–98; ead., "I vescovi nell'agiografia italogreca," in *Histoire et culture dans l'Italie byzantine*, eds., A. Jacob, J.-M. Martin and G. Noyé (Rome, 2006) [Collection de l'École Française de Rome, 368], 134–7; ead., "Note sul dossier agiografico di Leone di Catania: la trasmissione della leggenda e la figura del mago Eliodoro," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*, n. s. 44 (2007): 1–38.

the mediation of a Jewish magician, a popular theme in Byzantine literature of the first Iconoclasm.⁵⁸

From what has been said it is evident that the Byzantine sources of the seventh and eighth centuries shed little light on Italian Jews, though they do show that imperial policies towards Jews were—at least to a certain extent—known and applied in the territories which still belonged to the Empire.

In the seventies of the ninth century, just when the Emperor Basil I recovered large parts of southern Italy from the Lombards and the Arabs, Sicily was lost forever to the Byzantines. Syracuse, the administrative capital of the island, fell in 878. Basil's decrees for the conversion of the Jews, described in Byzantine chronicles and discussed by contemporary theologians, are also mentioned in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew sources from southern Italy, where they were apparently applied. For the year 6382 (873/874) the so-called *Chronicon Siculo-Saracenum* says that the Jews were baptized: ἐβαπτίσθησαν οἱ Ἑβραῖοι (or Ἰουδαῖοι).⁵⁹ In 911 the French cleric Auxilius, who then lived between Rome and Naples wrote: *Basilii siquidem imperator, pater imperatorum Leonis et Alexandri multos Iudaeorum per vim baptizari fecit, ex quibus ammodum pauci parvo post tempore spontanei prae-buerunt assensum credendi in Christum et evangelica mandata pariter-que apostolica documenta, ut moris est, custodire libenter professi sunt, attamen nemo eorum iterum baptizatus est.*⁶⁰ In the *Sefer Yuhasin*, written by Ahima'az Ben Paltiel in 1054, the same imperial initiative is recounted from the Jewish point of view, in a rather hagiographic form, as one of the most glorious events in the life of the author's ancestor Rabbi Shefatiah of Oria. According to Ahima'az, through discussion with the emperor and a miracle which he performed at the imperial court in Constantinople by liberating the emperor's daughter from an evil demon, the rabbi saved his local community from being baptized.⁶¹ Obviously, the anti-Jewish politics of Basil I were deeply rooted in the collective memory of southern Italian Jews. It

⁵⁸ Acconcia Longo, "La Vita di s. Leone," 82–5; H. Gauer, *Texte zum byzantinischen Bilderstreit. Der Synodalbrief der drei Patriarchen des Ostens von 836 und seine Verwendung in sieben Jahrhunderten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994), 90–4; 106, 114, 134–7, 142f.

⁵⁹ P. Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, I (Wien, 1975) [Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae XII, 1], 333.

⁶⁰ E. Dümmler, *Auxilius und Vulgarius* (Leipzig, 1866), 109f.

⁶¹ *The Chronicle of Ahima'az*, 76–8, 260–70.

is interesting to observe, however, that in the acts of the local synod celebrated by bishop Theodosius of Oria in 887/888, no Jews or Jewish customs are mentioned.⁶²

In subsequent centuries, until the Norman conquest in the second half of the eleventh century, the geographical setting of the Jewish communities in southern Italy does not appear to have changed very much. The Neapolitan deeds mention a *sinagogam Hebreorum* and *vicus Iudeorum* which was close to the *Porta S. Ianuarii*,⁶³ and Jewish communities are attested in the capitals of the Lombard principalities Benevento,⁶⁴ Capua,⁶⁵ and Salerno.⁶⁶ As for the territories directly under Byzantine rule, the local Jewish communities are in general poorly documented, although we know more about Apulia, especially through Jewish sources, than about Calabria and the Basilicata. Occasionally, however, the far richer sources of Norman times can help fill in some of the *lacunae* of the previous period.

As we have said, it is a well known *topos* in medieval Hebrew literature that the Jewish settlements in Apulia go back to the prisoners of war abducted from Jerusalem to Italy by the Emperor Titus.⁶⁷ For the Byzantine period one gets the impression that Jews generally preferred to live in the major administrative centers, such as Bari and Rossano,

⁶² *Spicilegium Casinense*, I (Montecassino, 1888), 377–81.

⁶³ B. Capasso, ed., *Monumenta ad Neapolitani ducatus historiam pertinentia* II, 1 (Naples, 1885) nr. 243, p. 152 (a. 984–985), nr. 316, p. 194 (1002); N. Ferorelli, *Gli Ebrei nell'Italia meridionale dall'età romana al secolo XVIII* (Torino 1915), (reprint: Bologna, 1980), 24f; G. Lacerenza, "Memorie e luoghi della cultura ebraica," in *Napoli nel Medioevo. Segni culturali di una città* (Galatina, 2007), 59–75.

⁶⁴ Funerary inscriptions from Benevento (VIII/IX cent.): P. Rugo, *Le iscrizioni dei sec. VI-VII-VIII esistenti in Italia*, IV: *I ducati di Spoleto e Benevento* (Cittadella, 1978), nos. 25, 26, 51–52, 54, 56, 59, 60, 62; *The Chronicle of Ahima'az*, 244, 282, 322.

⁶⁵ *The Chronicle of Ahima'az*, 310, 348. In 1041 Prince Waimar gave eleven Jews, residents of Capua and belonging to two different families, together with their descendants and all of their movable and immovable properties *et scole eorum hebraice*, to his relative the *comes palatinus* Grimoald and his heirs. Thenceforward they were required to pay to Grimoald the taxes and deliver the *corvées* which until then they had owed to the prince: P. M. Tropeano, *Codice diplomatico Verginiano*, I. 947–1102 (Montevergine, 1977) no. 47, pp. 180–3; H. Taviani-Carozzi, "Les Juifs dans les cités lombardes d'Italie du Sud (X^e–XII^e s.)," in *Villes et sociétés urbaines au Moyen Âge. Hommage à M. le Professeur Jacques Heers* (Paris, 1994), [*Cultures et civilisations médiévales*, 11], 269–80.

⁶⁶ The local *iudaica* is mentioned several times: M. Morcaldi, M Schiani and S. De Stephano, eds., *Codex diplomaticus Cavensis* II (Milan, 1875), no. 442, p. 323 (a. 991); IV (Milan, 1877), no. 567, pp. 46f. (a. 1004), no. 651, pp. 196f. (a. 1012); V (Milan, 1878), nr. 841, pp. 211f. (a. 1031); VII (Milan, 1888), no. 1231, pp. 298f. (a. 1056).

⁶⁷ Note 19.

or in the more important ports which connected the southern Italian provinces with Constantinople, such as Otranto and Taranto. But according to some early Norman documents they also settled in towns like Melfi and Troia⁶⁸ which had been founded on the major thoroughfares by the Byzantine catepan in the twenties of the eleventh century.⁶⁹

In his *Sefer Yuhasin* Ahima'az Ben Paltiel refers to a fictitious conversation between his ancestor Rabbi Paltiel and the emir al-Mui'z which allegedly took place after the Arab conquest of Byzantine Oria in 977. In a dream the emir had seen three stars which he thought signified the three southern Italian cities he would conquer after Oria: Taranto, Otranto, and Bari. The rabbi however tells him that he will become the ruler of three countries: Sicily, Ifrikiya, and Egypt.⁷⁰ Al-Mui'z, who by the way never set foot in Italy, did indeed conquer the three countries, but perhaps Ahima'az considered the four towns, Oria, Taranto, Otranto, and Bari, as the most important Jewish settlements in Apulia. Since the highly fragmentary documentation does not provide much insight into the life and civilization of the Jews in Byzantine southern Italy, I shall try in the following pages to present the Jewish communities of these cities as case stories.

Oria had been an important Byzantine stronghold during the years 834–871 when parts of Apulia, especially Bari and Taranto, constituted an Arab emirate. In this period Otranto was the only Byzantine port in Italy which connected Constantinople with Sicily, and Oria played an essential role in the defence of its hinterland. For reasons of security the bishop of Brindisi had moved his residence to Oria. In the eighties of the ninth century the bishop Theodosius deposited the relics of St Barsanuphius in a chapel close to the *porta Hebraica* or *porta Hebraea*.⁷¹ The local Jewish community is mostly known through funerary inscriptions and the *Sefer Yuhasin* of Ahima'az ben

⁶⁸ A. Mercati, "Le pergamene di Melfi all'Archivio segreto Vaticano," in *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati*, V (Città del Vaticano, 1946) [Studie Testi 125], no. 9, p. 305, no. 2, p. 274; Benjamin da Tudela, *Libro di viaggi*, a cura di L. Minervini (Palermo, 1989), 47; N. Kamp, *Kirche und Monarchie im staufischen Königreich Sizilien*. I. *Prosopographische Grundlegung: Bistümer und Bischöfe des Königreichs 1194–1266*. 2. *Apulien und Kalabrien* (München, 1975), 487, 508.

⁶⁹ V. von Falkenhausen, "Between Two Empires: Byzantine Italy in the Reign of Basil II," in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. P. Magdalino (Leiden, 2003), 148f.

⁷⁰ *The Chronicle of Ahima'az*, 314.

⁷¹ "De S. Barsanuphio Solitario," in *Acta sanctorum*, Aprilis II, 26 A–D.

Paltiel. Although the author mentions the Jewish prisoners of the Emperor Titus as the founders of the town, the tradition of his own family starts only in the ninth century with his ancestor Rabbi Amitai “a wise man [—] in Torah, a poet and logician, who mastered the Law of God, an intelligent person among his people.... And he had sons fair and honest, wise and intelligent, learned persons and poets, educators and teachers to decent pupils. Princes and lords, who understand mysteries, composers of rhymed verses, adept in the mysteries, wise watchers, intelligent observers, astute authors of prayers, learned in the *Book of Righteousness*, observers of the *Mystery of the Chariot*. The first was Rabbi Shephatiah, who engaged in the salutary Law; the second was Rabbi Hananel, who meditated on the Law of God brought down by Yekutiel; the third was Elazar, who speculated on that which was given in the third (the Torah).” About Shephatiah’s son Amittai, a renowned poet of *piyyutim*, the same text says that God “strengthened his *yeshivah* with the wise men of his academy.”⁷² There might be some exaggeration in the author’s pride in the excellence of his ancestors’ religious scholarship and poetry, but apparently the Jews of Oria cherished high standards of learning. When in 925 Oria was conquered by the Arabs, the Latin chronicle reports to the massacre of part of the male population and the abduction of the rest into slavery.⁷³ The Arabic sources boast of the rich booty.⁷⁴ The Jewish texts, however, lament the loss of scholars: “Ten learned and pious rabbis... were slain.”⁷⁵ Moreover, two young Jews who on that occasion were captured by the Arabs went on to outstanding scholarly careers: one was the then twelve-years-old Shabbetai Donnolo, the well-known doctor and astrologer,⁷⁶ the other may have been Mūsà ben El’azār, a famous physician, astrologer, and politician at the Fatimid court, founder of a dynasty of court physicians who has been tentatively identified with

⁷² *The Chronicle of Ahima‘az*, 234–236, and note 59.

⁷³ Lupus Protospatharius [MGH, *Scriptores V*], p. 53: *capta est Oria a Sarracenis mense Iulii et interfecerunt cunctos mares, reliquos vero duxerunt in Africam eos venundantes.*

⁷⁴ “Kitāb ‘al Bayān ‘al Mugrib,” in *Biblioteca arabo-sicula. Versione italiana*, II, ed., M. Amari (Torino, 1881), 27f.

⁷⁵ Shabbetai Donnolo, *Sefer Hakhmoni*. Introduzione, testo critico e traduzione italiana, annotata e commentata a cura di P. Mancuso (Firenze, 2009) [Biblioteca ebraica italiana], 47. The English translation is quoted from J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641–1204* (Athens, 1939) [Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie, 30], no. 87, p. 149.

⁷⁶ Shabbetai Donnolo, *Sefer Hakhmoni*, 8–18.

paltiel, descendent of the Rabbi Amittai mentioned above.⁷⁷ After the Arab conquest Oria lost its importance as a center of Jewish culture. Some of the survivors moved to Bari or Otranto.⁷⁸

The Jewish community of Bari also traced its origins back to the Emperor Titus,⁷⁹ and Jewish inscriptions from Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages have been preserved.⁸⁰ But when in 894 Bari (in the wording of Ahima'az: "metropolis which is facing the sea")⁸¹ became the capital of Byzantine southern Italy, first of the *thema* of Langobardia, then of the catepanate, and residence of the governor, first the στρατηγὸς Λογγιβαρδίας and later the κατεπάνω Ἰταλίας, the town became an important observation point. From the end of the ninth to the second half of the eleventh century, Bari was the center of Byzantine politics in Italy, the place where one could approach the highest Byzantine authorities in the country, and where official news from Constantinople arrived first, as for instance, according to Ahima'az, the communication of Basil I's death: "the writ too arrived, for the kings of Constantinople followed their custom, that when a king would die they would send a written announcement to Bari, and they would write the day and hour of the king's passing."⁸² At the end of the reign of Romanus I, when an anti-Jewish pogrom was organized, "the fire was first kindled in our town," wrote a Jew from Bari to Hasdai ibn Shaprut, chief minister of the caliph of Cordova. Thus there was time enough to warn the co-religionists in Otranto—and presumably also in other places—who could hide the Torah.⁸³ Bari was also the setting for the only other likely case of anti-Jewish persecution in Byzantine southern Italy, known to me: in 1051, when Argyros, the new Byzantine governor, entered the city, the Jewish quarter was burnt for unknown reasons.⁸⁴ But since the *iudeca* was situated close

⁷⁷ B. Lewis, "Paltiel: A Note," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 30 (1967): 177–81; C. Colafermina, "Un medico ebreo di Oria alla corte dei Fātīmidī," *Materia giudaica. Rivista dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio del giudaismo* 11/1–2 (2006): 5–12.

⁷⁸ *The Chronicle of Ahima'az*, 324–34; Starr, *The Jews*, 150, 153.

⁷⁹ Starr, *The Jews*, 110.

⁸⁰ Note 14.

⁸¹ *The Chronicle of Ahima'az*, 320.

⁸² *Ibid.* 306.

⁸³ J. Mann, "Hisdai ibn Shaprūt and his Diplomatic Intervention on Behalf of the Jews in Christian Europe," in *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, ed., J. Mann (Cincinnati, 1931), 12–6.

⁸⁴ *Anonymi Barensis Chronicon* (Milan, 1724) [Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, 5] 151: *zalavit ipse* (the duke Argyrus) *Iudeam*.

to the sea-shore and the palace of the catepan,⁸⁵ and the political climate in the town was tense and close to civil war, the fire might also have been a coincidence.

The continuous political and administrative interplay between Constantinople, Bari, and the other major towns of southern Italy encouraged trade. Since the end of the tenth century, we know of commercial activities between Bari and Byzantium in which Jews may have participated.⁸⁶ Among the documents of the Genizah there is a letter of Jacob b. Amram, Nagid of Fustat, who "arranged for a big collection for a Rumī relative who had been robbed while travelling between Salerno and Bari."⁸⁷

Among the five funerary inscriptions from Bari datable to the ninth century there is one of a man with the title of *strtygws* (στρατηγός),⁸⁸ whatever this means in a Jewish context. He was perhaps a leader of the community. It would appear significant, however, that Elias b. Mosè used the same title as the governors of Byzantine themes. In the forties of the tenth century the head of the Jewish community of Bari, Abraham b. Sason, was a physician, which was normal in all Mediterranean countries, Islamic or Christian.⁸⁹ There was in the town a well-known rabbinical court to which Hananel, the son of the vizir Paltiel, applied to recover the family's property which had been taken during the Arab raid of Oria.⁹⁰ A *responsum* of this court concerning marriage arrangements has been preserved and may be dated to the end of the tenth or early eleventh century.⁹¹

The only Latin deed from Byzantine southern Italy known to me which explicitly mentions a Jew was drawn up at Bari. In the first half

⁸⁵ L.-R. Ménager, *Recueil des actes des ducs normands d'Italie (1042-1127)*, I. *Les premiers ducs (1046-1087)*, (Bari, 1981) [Società di storia patria per la Puglia. Documenti e monografie, 45], no. 44, pp. 143f.: In 1084 Robert Guiscard grants to Ursus, archbishop of Bari, the donation given by the Empress Theodora (1055-1056) to one of his predecessors, archbishop Nicholas (attested between 1035 and 1061), consisting of *magnum curtem domnicam sive de catapano prope mare cum omnibus edificiiis* which was situated *prope iudecam*. Even though Robert Guiscard's diploma is a fake, there is no reason to believe that the topographical indications were not correct.

⁸⁶ E. Ashtor, "Gli Ebrei nel commercio mediterraneo nell'alto Medioevo (sec. X-XI)," in *Gli Ebrei nell'alto Medioevo. 30 marzo-5 aprile 1978* (Spoleto, 1980) [Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 26], 433.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁸ Colafemmina, "L'insediamento ebraico," 514.

⁸⁹ Starr, *The Jews*, 154; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, II, 240-7.

⁹⁰ *The Chronicle of Ahima'az*, 320.

⁹¹ Starr, *The Jews*, 172f.; Colafemmina, "L'insediamento ebraico," 515.

of the eleventh century—the exact date of the document, which is in very bad condition, cannot be established—*Manache ebreo filio Moisen de civitate Bari* sold a property with olive trees to a local Christian.⁹² There is, however, no way to estimate the size of the Jewish community in Bari, for when Benjamin of Tudela travelled through Apulia the town had just been destroyed by William I (1156) and nobody was living there.⁹³

Again, learning and poetry were very important in the community of Bari. Cesare Colafemmina has published and dated to the ninth century the funeral inscription of Mosè b. Elia teacher and poet.⁹⁴ Another poet, Elia b. Shemaiah, author of at least forty *piyyutim*, has been tentatively identified with one of the members of the rabbinical court at end of the tenth century.⁹⁵ More revealing is the legend of four rabbis, eminent scholars, who in the second half of the tenth century, during their journey from Bari to Alexandria, were kidnapped by pirates and after having been ransomed in three different cities became the heads of the rabbinical academies at Fustat, Kairawan, and Cordova.⁹⁶ There must have been good reason for the motto coined in the twelfth century by Rabbi Jacob b. Meir of Troyes: “For out of Bari shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Otranto.”⁹⁷

Conversion of Christians and Jews went both ways in Bari. According to a diploma of Sikelgaita and her son Roger Borsa from March 1086, an ancient synagogue in the *iudeca* had been previously—perhaps before the Norman conquest—transformed by the sons of *Offus* into a church dedicated to the saintly popes Silvester and Leo.⁹⁸ The dedication to the two popes is quite indicative: as we have said, Silvester was famous in the Middle Ages for his legendary religious discussion with twelve rabbis, whereas Leo I has always been considered a stronghold of orthodoxy. On the other side there was Andrew, archbishop of Bari (1061–1066), who may have converted to Judaism when he was in

⁹² V. De Donato, “Aggiunte al codice diplomatico barese. Pergamene dell’archivio della Cattedrale,” *Archivio storico pugliese* 27 (1974): 210f.

⁹³ Benjamin da Tudela, 47.

⁹⁴ Colafemmina, “L’insediamento ebraico,” 519f.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 515.

⁹⁶ A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Forth Crusade* (London, 1971), 167.

⁹⁷ Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 168.

⁹⁸ Ménager, *Recueil des actes*, no. 47, pp. 171f.: *locum Sinagoge in quo ecclesiam dedicare fecerunt filii Offi in honore sancti Silvestri et sancti Leonis pape, quam mihi olim ipsi Judei dederunt cum omnibus eius pertinentiis stabilibus et mobilibus*. The donation is confirmed by Roger Borsa in June 1087: *ibid.*, no. 61, pp. 215–219.

Constantinople, from where he is said to have moved to Cairo. We owe this information to the autobiographical papers of John-Obadiah, a Norman cleric of Oppido in the Basilicata, himself a convert to Judaism in 1102, who says he heard about the conversion when he was a child.⁹⁹ Since Andrew left for Constantinople in 1066, shortly before the Norman conquest of Bari, and then disappears from the Italian scene and sources, one cannot exclude slander here with the intention of destroying the memory of an unpopular bishop. In a like manner, Andrew's successor Ursus, a Norman partisan, was said to have converted to Islam, which is certainly untrue.¹⁰⁰ But there are good reasons to believe in Andrew's conversion to Judaism: the intellectual life in Byzantine southern Italy was uninspiring. Except for some poor chronographical texts and Greek hagiography, the literary production of the Christians in that area was zero. Maybe the archbishop had been attracted by the more stimulating intellectual climate among the Jewish scholars in his diocese.

According to the Jewish tradition recorded in some of the manuscripts of the *Yosippon*, the Emperor Titus had settled 5000 prisoners from Jerusalem in Otranto and Taranto.¹⁰¹ When Benjamin of Tudela visited Otranto in the late sixties of the twelfth century, the local Jewish community consisted of about 500 members. This is the highest number he mentions in any town of the former Byzantine territories in southern Italy. Otranto is situated in the southern Salento, at the point closest to the other side of the Adriatic, and during the Byzantine period it was by far the most important harbor connecting the southern Italian provinces with Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean. After the Norman conquest and during the Crusades other, especially larger Apulian ports were used as well, but Otranto never lost its importance. The medieval archives of the town have not survived; no legal deed of the Byzantine period exists. Thus we know almost nothing about the local history of that time.¹⁰² Thanks to its geographi-

⁹⁹ C. Colafemmina, "La conversione al giudaismo di Andrea arcivescovo di Bari," in *Giovanni-Ovadiah da Oppido, proselito, viaggiatore e musicista dell'età normanna*. Atti del convegno internazionale di Oppido Lucano, 28–30 marzo 2004, a cura di A. De Rosa e M. Perani (Firenze, 2005), 55–65.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 60–2.

¹⁰¹ Colafemmina, *Gli ebrei a Taranto*, 27f.

¹⁰² V. von Falkenhausen, "Tra Occidente e Oriente: Otranto in epoca bizantina," in *Otranto nel Medioevo tra Bisanzio e l'Occidente*, ed., H. Houben (Galatina, 2007), 13f.

cal position Otranto was an ideal place for commercial activities. Mar Elijah, “an upright man who was a merchant,” was killed during the pogrom at the end of the reign of Romanus I.¹⁰³ During the same persecution “the holy congregation of Otranto has lost three leaders...: R. Isaiah, a prominent and learned man; R. Menahem, a pious and scrupulously observant scholar whereas there survived R. Hodaiah and his son, both learned men.”¹⁰⁴ In fact, the learning of the Jews of Otranto was proverbial in the Middle Ages, if one remembers, for instance, the famous motto of R. Jacob b. Meir of Troyes quoted previously. Several unconnected pieces of information appear to confirm his statement. Shabbetai Donnolo, the great physician and astrologer, might have stayed there, for he recommends the honey of Otranto for medical purposes.¹⁰⁵ Many highly productive religious poets from the Salento are known, among them Menachem Corizzi of Otranto who has been studied by Isai Sonne.¹⁰⁶ According to Luisa Cuomo, the glosses to the Mishnah in the vernacular of the Salento preserved in a Hebrew manuscript of the Biblioteca Palatina of Parma (cod. 3173, De Rossi 138) can be dated to the tenth or eleventh century.¹⁰⁷ And fragments of several Hebrew manuscripts copied in the Salento, presumably at Otranto, during the last decades of the eleventh century have been identified.¹⁰⁸ Finally, it may not be just a coincidence that in post-Byzantine times one of the great Greek intellectuals of Otranto, the γραμματικός Nicolaus who became abbot of the monastery of Casole under the name of Nectarius (1155/1160–1235), wrote a ponderous treatise against the Jews (Κατὰ Ἰουδαίων).¹⁰⁹ This

¹⁰³ Starr, *The Jews*, 153.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁰⁶ I. Sonne, “Alcuni osservazioni sulla poesia religiosa ebraica in Puglia,” *Rivista degli studi orientali* 14 (1933/1934): 68–77.

¹⁰⁷ L. Cuomo, “Antichissime glosse salentine nel codice ebraico di Parma, De Rossi, 138,” *Medioevo romanzo* 4 (1977): 185–271, especially 227f.

¹⁰⁸ M. Perani and A. Grazi, “La scuola dei copisti ebrei pugliesi (Otranto?) del sec. XI. Nuove scoperte,” *Materia giudaica. Rivista dell’Associazione italiana per lo studio del giudaismo* 11 (2006): 13–34.

¹⁰⁹ J. M. Hoeck – R. J. Loenertz, *Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto. Abt von Casole. Beiträge zur Geschichte der ost-westlichen Beziehungen unter Innozenz III. und Friedrich II.*, (Ettal, 1965) [*Studia Patristica et Byzantina*, 11], 88–109; M. Chrontz, ed., *Νεκταρίου, ἡγουμένου μονῆς Κασούλων (Νικολάου Ὑδροουντίου) Διάλεξις κατὰ Ἰουδαίων* (Athens, 2009).

kind of religious literature is quite common in Byzantium,¹¹⁰ but no other comparable text was ever written in Byzantine Italy. Nicolaus-Nectarius is known to have had theological discussions with learned Jews in Thessalonica, Constantinople, and Boethia during his journeys to the Latin Empire of Byzantium. Since he appears to have had some knowledge of Hebrew he could have learned in his native city, though in his treatise he never refers to local Jews.

The Jewish community of Taranto boasted of the same ancient Roman origins as Oria, Bari, and Otranto. For the period from the fourth to the ninth century, Colafemmina lists twenty funerary inscriptions from Taranto, the older ones (fourth to fifth century) in Greek, the others (seventh to ninth century) in Latin and Hebrew or bilingual.¹¹¹ Two Greek deeds from Taranto (1033 and 1039) mention the Jew Theophylactus, called also Chimarias (Θεοφύλακτον τῷ γένει τῶν Ἑβραίων, τὸν λεγόμενον Χιμαρίαν), who buys two large contiguous vineyards for the price, respectively, of five or three *nomismata* from Leo, son of the *komes* Ischanakes.¹¹² The documents, which follow the normal legal procedure of Byzantine contracts, reveal that Theophylactus was a relatively wealthy person and give evidence that Jews owned property beside their Christian compatriots. In some Greek deeds of the last decades of the twelfth century, there is mention of a πόρτη or πύλη ἑβραϊκή close to the sea-shore, next to the monastery of St. Bartholomew.¹¹³ According to Benjamin of Tudela, in the late sixties of the twelfth century some three hundred Jews lived in Taranto, some of whom were learned men. Moreover, he says that the inhabitants of the town were Greeks. This is not entirely true, for although until the end of the twelfth century most of the legal deeds of Taranto were written in Greek, and the most important monasteries were Greek,¹¹⁴ the local bishops, and later archbishops and the clergy of the cathedral were,

¹¹⁰ A. Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos. Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen antijüdischen Dialogliteratur und ihrem Judenbild* (Stuttgart, 1999), [Byzantinisches Archiv 18].

¹¹¹ Colafemmina, *Gli ebrei a Taranto*, 28–44.

¹¹² F. Trinchera, *Syllabus Graecarum membranarum* (Naples, 1865), no. 26, pp. 29–31, no. 31, pp. 36–38. The Greek name Theophylaktos is the translation of the Jewish name Chimarias.

¹¹³ G. Robinson, ed., *History and Cartulary of the Greek Monastery of St. Elias and St. Anastasius of Carbone*, II, 2 (Rome, 1930) [Orientalia Christiana XIX, 1], 93 (an. 1177), 133 (an. 1198)

¹¹⁴ V. von Falkenhausen, "Un inedito documento greco del monastero di S. Vito del Pizzo (Taranto)," *Cenacolo*, n. s. 7/19 (1995): 10–4.

however, Latin even during the Byzantine period.¹¹⁵ Perhaps the Jewish community was Greek-speaking, an hypothesis which might be confirmed by the fact that the title of the president of the community was *protus* (πρωτος).¹¹⁶

Since Benjamin of Tudela did not visit the Jewish communities of Calabria on his journey to the eastern Mediterranean, we have no reliable source for the twelfth century. Nevertheless, we know that in the Norman period Jews were well established in several towns in Calabria. During the last decade of the eleventh century, the Norman duke Roger Borsa and his mother Sikelgaita gave eight Jews and, subsequently, the Jewish *tinctoria* to Nicholas archbishop of Rossano;¹¹⁷ and during the twelfth and thirteenth century the Jewish community in the town is well attested.

In Byzantine times Rossano was an important military and cultural stronghold in northern Calabria. In contrast to most Calabrian cities, including the former capital Reggio, Rossano was never raided or occupied by the Arabs. Though many Greek manuscripts written in the so-called script of Rossano have survived, as also in Otranto, no legal document of the Byzantine period has been preserved. However, the *Life* of Saint Nilus, a well-educated Greek monk, born in Rossano around 910, who lived there until 980 and died in Grottaferrata, near Rome, in 1004, offers interesting insights into the relationship between Jews and Christians in Calabria. This text was written in the early twenties of the eleventh century by an anonymous Greek monk who had followed the saint from Calabria to Latium and shows a pronounced anti-Jewish tendency. Although the author is generally well informed about the historical events in southern Italy during Nilus's lifetime,¹¹⁸ one has to take into account that he does not want to write history, but hagiography. Thus each episode must be considered as an *exemplum* intended for the edification of the pious reader.

¹¹⁵ Ead., "Taranto in epoca bizantina," *Studi medievali*, s. III, 9 (1968): 152–60.

¹¹⁶ D. Girgensohn und N. Kamp, "Urkunden und Inquisitionen der Stauferzeit aus Tarent," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 41 (1961): 189.

¹¹⁷ W. Holtzmann, "Papst-, Kaiser- und Normannenurkunden aus Unteritalien," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 36 (1956): 27f. The diplomas have not been preserved, but were confirmed later by Roger II and Frederic II.

¹¹⁸ V. von Falkenhausen, "La Vita di s. Nilo come fonte storica per la Calabria bizantina," in *Atti del Congresso internazionale su s. Nilo di Rossano (28 settembre–1° ottobre 1986)*, (Rossano-Grottaferrata, 1989), 271–305.

Four episodes concerning Jews are related in the text. The first one is the often discussed and disconcerting story about a Jewish merchant who, returning from a fair, was robbed and killed by a young delinquent from Bisignano. Since the murderer escaped, the local judges got hold of his father-in-law in order to hand him over to the Jewish community so that they might crucify him. When Nilus was informed of this he sent one of his monks, George, an aristocrat of Rossano, to submit a letter of protest to the judges. He told them, as the law (νόμος) prescribed, that for every Christian killed seven Jews had to be put to death; and if the murderer's father-in-law was indeed crucified, they would have to execute six more Jews. In the case that the judges decided not to obey the law, instead of the delinquent's father-in-law they should kill the messenger. When asked by the judges, George, who had not known the contents of the letter, happily accepted Nilus's proposal. But in the end the prisoner was released and the monk returned to his monastery.¹¹⁹ Needless to say, such a law never existed either in Byzantium or in Italy. According to Cesare Colafemmina, Nilus recognized only biblical law and referred in his statement to *Genesis* 4:15, where it is said that he who kills Cain should be punished seven times.¹²⁰ Obviously, the spiritual significance of the story is to demonstrate George's humility and obedience. But for a Greek reader from Calabria the existence of Jewish merchants in the small town of Bisignano on the *via Popilia*, one of the major thoroughfares of Calabria, would have appeared plausible.

According to another Jewish episode related in the *Vita Nili*, a Jew from Rossano once asked Nilus to speak to him about God. Nilus invited him to take the Holy Scriptures and to come to his hermitage and stay there and read for as long as Moses had stayed on Mount Sinai. After this he would speak to him about God. The Jew did not dare to accept the invitation, for he feared to be thrown out of the synagogue and stoned by his co-religionists.¹²¹ So ends the story which is told to demonstrate the saint's wisdom.

More revealing are the two episodes which relate the encounters between Nilus and Donnolo, who is acknowledged as a scholar

¹¹⁹ G. Giovanelli, Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Νείλου τοῦ Νέου, (Badia di Grottaferrata, 1972), 80f.

¹²⁰ C. Colafemmina, "San Nilo di Rossano e gli ebrei," in *Atti del Congresso internazionale su s. Nilo di Rossano*, 126–130.

¹²¹ Giovanelli, Βίος, 93f.

of the law and expert in medical science (νομομαθῆ καὶ ἱκανὸν περὶ τὴν ἰατρικὴν ἐπιστήμην. According to the *Vita Nili*, the future monk and the Jewish scholar were well acquainted since their youth, but when Donnolo offered Nilus certain medicaments to help him endure his extreme ascetical exercises, the latter refused them with anger, saying that God was his doctor and nobody should say that Nilus took drugs from a Jew, which might be interpreted as pro-Jewish propaganda. The two met again at the deathbed of an eminent Byzantine official at Rossano: one as a doctor, the other as a spiritual guide. On this occasion Donnolo is witness to the official's final repentance and conversion.¹²² Unlike other Byzantine hagiographical texts which deal with the encounters of saints and Jews, the *Vita Nili* never mentions any attempt of Nilus to convert Donnolo to Christianity, nor is there any hint that Donnolo was condemned to the fire of hell. He just remains the respected physician who admires the spiritual rigour and power of the saintly protagonist.

We know very little about the adult life of Donnolo, but after having been ransomed from the Arabs in Taranto, he apparently continued to live in the Greek-speaking part of Byzantine southern Italy. In his *Sefer Ha-Yaqqar* he refers to the honey of Otranto, Oria, and Mirto, close to Rossano.¹²³ Thus it is generally thought that he lived in Rossano.¹²⁴ Except for the *Vita Nili*, Donnolo is never mentioned in contemporary Christian texts—Latin or Greek—from southern Italy. In our context it is irrelevant whether Nilus really knew Donnolo, but for the hagiographer, Donnolo was such an important person in Rossano that it was essential to connect him with the saint.

Although there is no further documentation about Jews in Byzantine Rossano, the figure of Donnolo demonstrates the high level of Jewish culture in the town, which was apparently continued by his students. Piergabriele Mancuso has shown that a passage of the *Sefer Hakhmoni* is quoted in the *Sefer Rossina*, a commentary of the Torah written by Samuel of Rossano at the end of the eleventh or the beginning of

¹²² Ibid., 93, 98.

¹²³ Starr, *The Jews*, 164.

¹²⁴ G. Fiaccadori, "Donnolo, Shabbetai bar Abrahām," in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 41 (Rome, 1992), 215; F. Luzzati Laganà, "La figura di Donnolo nello specchio della Vita di s. Nilo di Rossano," in *Sabbetai Donnolo. Scienza e cultura ebraica nell'Italia del secolo X*, ed., G. Lacerenza (Napoli, 2004) (Univ. degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale." Dipartimento di studi asiatici—Ser. Minor, 66), 69–103; Shabbetai Donnolo, *Sefer Hakhmoni*, 9f.

the twelfth century.¹²⁵ Furthermore, at the end of the twelfth century one of the major intellectuals from southern Italy, the Cistercian abbot Joachim of Fiore, who was born and educated in northern Calabria, wrote an important treatise against the Jews.¹²⁶ Joachim's *Exhortatorium Iudeorum*, normally dated in the decade from 1187 to 1196/7,¹²⁷ is based on the information given to the author by Peter Alfonsi, a converted Jew, and by a *peritissimo Hebreo*.¹²⁸

CONCLUSION

Bits and pieces of scattered information cannot provide a coherent panorama of Jews and Jewish life in Byzantine southern Italy. The Jews apparently continued to live, as before, in the more important administrative centers or in well-connected ports or towns. Concerning their professions, the Hebrew texts put a certain emphasis on rabbis and religious scholars, but there are also doctors, merchants, and landowners. Beginning with the eighties of the eleventh century, Norman diplomas mention the *tinctoria et celandria Iudeorum* in many cities,¹²⁹ whereas the documents of the Byzantine period never refer to dyers. But here a conclusion *ex silentio* would be a mistake, for this is simply a case of missing documentation. How could the Normans have established Jewish dyeing businesses in all the major cities of southern Italy in such a short time?

For the most part, the Jews seem to have used the language spoken or written by the majority of their Christian compatriots: Latin in northern and central Apulia, Greek in Salento and Calabria. Donnolo, who moved from the Salento to Calabria, refers to his research on Greek scientific literature,¹³⁰ whereas the author of the Josippon, who

¹²⁵ Shabbetai Donnolo, *Sefer Hakhmoni*, 266f., note 123.

¹²⁶ A. Patschovsky, ed., Ioachim abbas Florensis, *Exhortatorium Iudeorum* (Roma, 2006) [Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo. Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale, 26].

¹²⁷ Ioachim abbas Florensis, 44–61. The oldest extant manuscript (Padua, Bibl. Antoniana, 322) was written in Calabria during the 13th century: *ibid.* 62–116.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 158, n. 133.

¹²⁹ Ménager, *Recueil*, no. 61, p. 218.

¹³⁰ Shabbetai Donnolo, 49; G. Sermoneta, "Il neo-platonismo nel pensiero dei nuclei ebraici stanziati nell'Occidente latino (riflessioni sul 'Commento al Libro della Creazione' di Rabbi Šabbetai Donnolo)," in *Gli Ebrei nell'alto Medioevo. 30 marzo–5 aprile*

did not know Greek, worked on Latin texts, most probably in the area of Naples.¹³¹ Translated from a Latin original, a Hebrew catalogue of Roman and Byzantine emperors from Julius Caesar to Nicephorus II with brief annotations on Italian events was published by Adolf Neubauer in 1887.¹³² Several similar Latin compilations have been preserved in various manuscripts from southern Italy, for example the catalogue in cod. Cassin. 175 which is very close to the Hebrew text.¹³³

The translation of the catalogue of emperors shows that the Byzantine Jews in southern Italy were interested in the history of the Eastern Roman empire. Some of them were well informed about Byzantine habits and institutions. Ahima'az mentions the practice of sending news of an emperor's death to the capital of the *thema*; and he knows, with reference to his ancestor R. Hananel, that one needed an official sealed document (στυγίλλιον) to travel undisturbed through the various provinces of the empire in order to recover lost or illegally alienated property.¹³⁴ Without such a passport, one could easily be held up as a spy. A similar and almost contemporary *sigillum* was issued in 956 by Marianos Argyros, the Byzantine governor of the Italian provinces, to the abbot of Montecassino, allowing him to move undisturbed by imperial officials through southern Italy, in order to recover the abbey's scattered possessions.¹³⁵

On the whole it seems that there were no great problems in the interrelationship of Jews and Christians. The rareness of explicit references to Jews in southern Italian documents might well be an indication of normal social communication. Rabbi Hananel in Oria was on good terms with the local bishop,¹³⁶ and Nilus of Rossano is said to have been well acquainted from his youth with Donnolo. Jews, however, had no access to the higher ranks in politics and administration. Ahima'az refers to various members of his family who rose to eminent

1978 (Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 26), (Spoleto, 1980), 867–935. On Donnolo's dependence on Greek sources especially: 929f.

¹³¹ Lacerenza, "Memorie e luoghi," 65–9.

¹³² A. Neubauer, *Medieval Jewish Chronicles and Chronological Notes*, I (Oxford, 1887), 185–6.

¹³³ MGH, *Script. rer. Lang. et Ital.*, 485f. According to S. Gero, "Byzantine Imperial Prospography in a Medieval Hebrew Text," *Byzantion* 47 (1977): 157–162, the Hebrew version was translated from a Greek original, but the Latin texts are much closer.

¹³⁴ *The Chronicle of Ahima'az*, 320.

¹³⁵ Trinchera, *Syllabus*, no. 6, p. 5.

¹³⁶ *The Chronicle of Ahima'az*, 284–90.

positions in the Fatimid caliphate¹³⁷ and the principality of Capua.¹³⁸ Perhaps his family pride made him exaggerate. In Islamic countries the distinguished careers of Jews are well documented, but in Byzantium this would have been possible only after baptism.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 66–76, 316–20, 324–34.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 348.

THE JEWS OF *SLAVIA GRAECA*:
THE NORTHERN FRONTIER OF BYZANTINE JEWRY?

Alexander Kulik

זוה יהיה לכם גבול צפון...
Num 34:7

Most of the evidence indicating the existence of Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe¹ prior to the mass migration from Ashkenaz² originates from territories that were annexed to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, i.e., from the southwestern principalities of Rus',³ which since then had become an integral part of Lithuania and subsequently of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.⁴ These territories included the oldest and the most important centers of pre-Mongolian Kievan Rus', in which a Jewish presence was attested from the tenth century, on the one hand, and which were for an extended period part of the Byzantine *Kulturbereich*, on the other hand.

With the Mongolian conquest in the first half of the thirteenth century, evidence of the presence of Jews in Rus' is reduced to the territory of Galicia-Volhynia, which suffered less from the Mongolian invasion due to its western location.⁵ From the end of the Lithuanian

¹ According to the traditional narrow definition of the latter: the territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Confederation in its prime.

² A term of medieval Jewish geography applied to Germany, normally to its southern and western lands.

³ Known in Hebrew sources as רושיא/רושיאה, the term equivalent to "Rus'" and referring to the lands of the Eastern Slavs in the Middle Ages.

⁴ Only single reports come from the adjacent lands: northeastern Rus' (*Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, St. Petersburg, 1841–1885, 2.114–115; 5.164–165) and Polish trade routes between Germany and Rus' (B. D. Weinryb, "The Beginnings of East European Jewry in Legend and Historiography," *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman* (Leiden, 1962), 445–502; I. M. Ta-Shma, "On the History of Polish Jewry in the 12th–13th Centuries," *Zion* 53 (1988): 347–69 (Hebrew); idem, "New Material for the History of the Jews in Poland," *Zion* 54 (1989): 205–8 (Hebrew); idem, "On the History of the Jews in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Poland," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 10 (1997): 287–317.

⁵ With an exception of the short notice on a Jewish moneylender visiting Kashin in 1321 (see below; *Polnoe sobranie*, 15.414). For the Jews in Volhynia see below.

conquest in Rus' and the partition of Galicia-Volhynia between Poland and Lithuania, which occurred in the mid-fourteenth century, there are no extant references to a local Jewish population in north-eastern Rus'—what would come to be Muscovite Rus' in the future. Sources from Rus' refer at that time only to Jewish visitors coming to the area from elsewhere,⁶ as opposed to the relatively plentiful evidence of a Jewish presence in Lithuania and Poland from the same period of time.⁷ References to רוסיא/רושייא/רושיאה in Jewish sources from Ashkenaz from this period also must refer to "Lithuanian Rus'," which was still defined as "Rus" in numerous foreign sources, as well.

In recent decades, several studies have investigated the ever-increasing amount of evidence on cultural contacts between Jews and Christians, as reflected in Eastern Slavic literary documents from the Middle Ages.⁸ Based on this disparate evidence, we can identify a unique cul-

⁶ See East Slavic Chronicles: 1445—foreign Jewish merchants buy slaves in Novgorod (*Polnoe sobranie*, 3.240; 4.124; 17.187); 1471—Kievan Jews visit Novgorod in the retinue of the Prince Michailo Olelkovich (*Polnoe sobranie*, p. 4.235); 1490—a Jewish physician from Venice at the court of Ivan III. Jews from Lithuania and the Crimea are mentioned also in the diplomatic correspondence of Ivan III (G. O. Karpov, *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenij Drevnej Rossii s derzhavami inostrannymi*. Vol. 1 (RIO 41). St. Petersburg, 1884.

⁷ S. A. Bershadskij, *Dokumenty i materialy dlja istorii evreev v Rossii I: Dokumenty i registry k istorii litovskikh evreev (1388–1550)*, (St. Petersburg, 1882); *Registry i nadpisi. Svod materialov dlja istorii evreev v Rossii (80 g.—1800 g.)*, (St. Petersburg, 1899), Vol. 1, p. 68ff; A. Ja. Harkavi, *New and Old: Sources and Studies in the History of Israel and its Literature* (Jerusalem, 1970), 6–17 (Hebrew).

⁸ See A. A. Alexeev, *Tekstologija slavjanskoj Biblii (Bausteine zur slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte: Slavistische Forschungen XXIV)*, (St. Petersburg, 1999); idem, "Perevody s drevneevrejskikh originalov v drevnej Rusi," *Russian Linguistics* 11 (1987): 1–20; idem, "Russko-evrejskie literaturnye svjazi do 15 veka," *Jews and Slavs* 1 (1993): 44–75; M. Altbauer, M. Taube, "The Slavonic Book of Esther: When, Where, and from What Language was it Translated?," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 8 (1984): 304–20; A. Arkhipov, *Po tu storonu Sambationa* (Oakland, 1995); H. G. Lunt, M. Taube, "Early East Slavic Translations from Hebrew," *Russian Linguistics* 11 (1988): 147–87; idem, "The Slavonic Book of Esther: Translation from Hebrew or Evidence for a Lost Greek Text?," *Harvard Theological Review* 87/3 (1994): 347–62; idem, *The Slavonic Book of Esther: Text, Lexicon, Linguistic Analysis, Problems of Translation* (Cambridge, 1998); M. Taube, "O genezise odnogo rasskaza v sostave Ellinskogo letopisca vtoroj redakcii (o vzjatii Ierusalima Titom)," in *Russian Literature and History: In Honor of Professor I. Serman*, eds. Wolf Moskovich et al. (Jerusalem, 1989), 146–51; idem, "On some Unidentified and Misidentified Sources of the Academy Chronograph," in *Russian Philology and Literature presented to Prof. Victor D. Levin on his 75th birthday*, eds. Wolf Moskovich et al. (Jerusalem, 1992), 365–75; idem, "On the Slavic Life of Moses and its Hebrew Sources," in *Jews and Slavs* 1, eds. Wolf Moskovich et al. (Jerusalem, 1993), 84–119; *ibid.* "The Fifteenth-Century Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is There a Connection?" in *Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages* (= UCLA Slavic

tural reality that is not attested in other regions during this period. However, every researcher analyzing this material comes up against a problem: the detection of traces of cultural activity of the Jews in Rus' is at odds with the *direct* accounts referring to their presence there. The mere fact of a permanent settlement of Jews in Rus' is cast in doubt by some researchers, and the scant evidence that does exist is at times viewed as lacking historic value. Thus, the research of any and every issue pertaining to the Jewry of Rus' must first clarify the fundamental question: was there a permanent Jewish settlement in Rus'?

It is not uncommon to find radical evaluations in the research on the "pre-Ashkenazi" Jewish population in Kievan Rus', from hypercritical attempts to deny the fact of its existence,⁹ to an unjustified exaggeration of its size and of its role in the ensuing formation of Eastern European Jewry.¹⁰ There are various reasons for the extremist nature of these two opinions: (a) a need to adapt the conclusions to research perspectives that relate to broader themes (for example, Weinryb advocating the Ashkenazi homogeneousness of Polish Jewry,¹¹ or on the other pole, the scholars of Khazaria attempting to find traces of a Khazarian legacy in the region);¹² (b) ideological reasons (for instance, among Russian-Jewish scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who keenly sought legitimization in Russian society by

Studies, 4), eds. V. Vyacheslav Ivanov and J. Verkholtantsev (Moscow, 2005), 185–208; idem, "Which Hebrew Text of Algazel's Intentions Served for the Translation of the Slavic Logika?" in *Quadrivium I: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Wolf Moskovich*, eds. Moshe Taube et al. (Jerusalem, 2006), 47–52; J. Raba, *The Contribution and the Recompense: The Land and the People of Israel in Medieval Russian Thought* (Tel-Aviv, 2003) (Hebrew).

⁹ See Weinryb, "The Beginnings of East European Jewry"; idem, "The Myth of Samuel of Russia, the 12th Century Author of a Bible Commentary," *Jewish Quarterly Review. Special edition for the 75th Anniversary* (Philadelphia, 1967): 529–43:19–22; L. S. Chekin, "The Role of Jews in Early Russian Civilization in the Light of a New Discovery and New Controversies," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 17/4 (1990): 379–94.; *ibid.*, "K analizu upominanij o evrejakh v drevnerusskoj literature XI-XII vekov," *Slavjanovedenie* 3 (1994): 34–42.

¹⁰ See A. Ja. Garkavi, *Ob jazyke evreev zhivshikh v drevnee vremja na Rusi i slavjanskikh slovakh vstrechaemykh u evrejskikh pisatelej* (St. Petersburg, 1865), 99; H. Kuchera, *Die Chasaren, eine Historische Studie* (Wien, 1909); M. Baratz, *Sobranie trudov po voprosu o evrejskom elemente v russkoj pis'mennosti* (Paris, 1924–1927); A. N. Poliak, *Khazaria: A History of the Jewish Kingdom in Europe* (Tel-Aviv, 1953), 255–75 (Hebrew).

¹¹ See Weinryb, "The Beginnings of East European Jewry"; idem, "The Myth," 19–22.

¹² See Poliak, *Khazaria*, 255–75.

proving Jewish “authenticity” in the territory of the Russian empire);¹³ (c) and partial familiarity with the sources (for example, in contemporary studies that rely exclusively on Slavic material,¹⁴ or in studies carried out prior to the release of important sources, such as the findings of the Cairo Geniza).

None of these radical opinions is corroborated by the sources in our possession. In this article, I will present the major phenomena that enable us to infer the existence of this settlement: (a) Mutual corroboration of the sources: the evidence in our possession is not suspected of being the product of a uniform tradition emanating from a common source.¹⁵ On the contrary, it is possible to cite documents that belong to diverse and independent traditions, which corroborate one another even in their references to specific phenomena. (b) ‘Historical continuity’: the presence of the Jews in a specific territory is well documented before and after the period in question; (c) High ‘representativity’ of the evidence: on the basis of the limited sources in our possession, it is possible to relate to nearly all aspects of Jewish life. The presence of Jews in Rus’ is reflected in accounts of wide-ranging and balanced distribution, diverse occupations that are characteristic of the period, citations of communal structure and communal functions, certain cultural activity, and close contacts with the local gentile environment.

I. JEWISH PRESENCE IN MEDIEVAL RUS’

A. *Nature of the Sources*

Historical evidence of a Jewish presence in Rus’ prior to the “Lithuanian period” is scant, but may be found in diverse sources and independent traditions, as well as in various cultures. This is the case for internal sources (all of which are in Hebrew) that shed light on the history of the Jews of Rus’ from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries, including diplomatic and commercial correspondence from Khazaria

¹³ This model has been turned out in modern Russian scholarship, when Russian non-Jewish scholars consider Russian-Jewish contacts as an evidence of the high cultural level of pre-Mongolian Rus’. See, e.g., V. N. Toporov, *Svjatost’ i svjatye v russkoj dukhovnoj kulture*, V. 1 (Moskva, 1995), 340–57.

¹⁴ Chekin, “The Role of Jews”; idem, “K analizu.”

¹⁵ Despite Weinryb, “The Beginnings of East European Jewry”; Chekin, “K analizu.”

and Byzantium, and halakhic (Jewish legal) texts from Ashkenaz.¹⁶ The Slavic sources are richer, and they too include diverse genres, such as: (a) historiography, (b) civil and ecclesiastic legislation, (c) hagiography, (d) excerpts of different types of ecclesiastical literature related to the anti-Jewish polemic,¹⁷ (e) translations from Hebrew into Slavic (and possibly other textual relicts of cultural dialogue between Jews and Eastern Slavs, as well).¹⁸ Division of the sources into groups and sub-groups became an impediment toward progress in the subject, because most scholars were not fully adept in use of the tools necessary for study of the complete body of the material. Thus, they failed to notice the fact that the internal (Jewish) and external (non-Jewish) sources at times corroborate one another independently.

B. Historical Continuity

Evidence of the existence of Jewish settlement in the cities of western Khazaria (such as Kiev and Tmutorokan'), i.e., in the territory of Rus' prior to its political formation, is not contested.¹⁹ The same holds true for accounts of Jewish settlement in these territories following their

¹⁶ All Ashkenazi halakhic collections cited below date in the range between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries. Most Hebrew sources were assembled by Kupfer and Lewicki (*Źródła*).

¹⁷ For attempts to assemble or to summarize Slavic sources, see I. Malyshevskij, *Evrei v juzhnoj Rusi i Kieve v X-XII vekakh (Trudy Kievskoj dukhovnoj Akademii VI, IX)* (Kiev, 1878); *Regesty i nadpisi*, 54–65; Ju. Gessen, *Istorija evrejskogo naroda v Rossii* (Petrograd, 1916); I. Z. Berlin, *Istoricheskie sud'by evrejskogo naroda na territorii russkogo gosudarstva* (Petrograd, 1919); idem, "Evrei v Juzhnoj Rusi do obrazovanija Russkogo gosudarstva, Evrei v Juzhnoj Rusi v epokhu Kievskogo i Galitsko-Volynskogo gosudarstva," *Istorija evreev v Rossii II/1 (Istorija evrejskogo naroda XII/1)* (Moskva, 1921), 1–84, 113–54; Weinryb, "The Beginnings of East European Jewry"; S. Ettinger, "The Kievan Rus," *History of the Jewish People: The Dark Ages* (Tel-Aviv, 1973), 187–9 (Hebrew); H. Birnbaum, "On Some Evidence of Jewish Life and Anti-Jewish Sentiments in Medieval Russia," *Viator* 4 (1973): 225–55; O. Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe in Relation to the Khazars, the Rus' and the Lithuanians," *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective* (Edmonton, 1988), 3–21; Chekin, "The Role of Jews."

¹⁸ See Alekseev, "Perevody"; *ibid.*, "Russko-evrejskie literaturnye svjazi do 15 veka," *Jews and Slavs* 1 (1993): 44–75; Altbauer, Taube, *The Slavonic Book*; Arkhipov, *Po tu storonu*; Lunt, Taube, "Early East Slavic Translations"; idem, *The Slavonic*; Taube, "O genezise"; Taube, "On some unidentified"; idem, "On the Slavic," idem, "The Fifteenth-Century Ruthenian Translations," idem, "Which Hebrew Text," Toporov, "Svjatost."

¹⁹ There were even attempts to count the Jewish population of Khazaria, although the data is far from being sufficient for such an exercise (see Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic").

annexation to Lithuania.²⁰ The continuity of evidence of Jewish life in this territory, over which the sovereignty was changing, and the lack of data on persecution or economic distress, may be indicative of Jewish settlement continuity in the region. This is the case for the entire region at least until the Mongolian conquest, and after the conquest as well, in those places that did not suffer from it, and which might even have served as places of refuge (like Galicia-Volhynia and Novgorod).

C. Dissemination

Our very scant sources nevertheless reflect the wide dissemination of Jews, including Kiev and Chernigov in the center of our region, Volhynia in the west, Tmutorokan in the south, and probably Suzdal in the northeast.²¹ The Jewish presence in Kiev is well documented as early as the tenth century, when the Kievan Letter was written.²² Slavic sources are relatively abundant: “Khazarian Jews” came to Prince Vladimir according to a legend included in the *Primary Chronicle* (986–988); according to his *Vita* (46), Theodosius of the Cave Monastery of Kiev held disputes with Jews.²³ A Jewish quarter and Jewish gates are mentioned in the *Chronicles* under the years 1124, 1146, and 1151, and, also, in the context of the riots of 1113.²⁴ As for Jewish sources in the same twelfth century, “Moses of Kiev,” a pupil of Rabenu Tam, is known through a responsum sent to him by R. Samuel ben Ali of Baghdad and is mentioned in Western Jewish works: *Sefer ha-Yashar* and *Responsa* by R. Meir of Rothenburg, and possibly also as “Moses

²⁰ See Bershadskij, *Dokumenty i materialy; Regesty i nadpisi*: 68ff.

²¹ *Polnoe sobranie* 2.114–115; 5.164–165; see A. Kulik, “The Earliest Evidence on the Jewish Presence in Western Rus’,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 27/1–4 (2004–05 [2009]): 13–24.

²² A recommendation letter signed by heads of the Kievan community, found in Cairo Geniza (Cambridge, ms T-S 12.122) and published by N. Golb and O. Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, 1982). The question of Jewish/Khazarian presence in Kiev is connected also with a discussion on the relative Khazarian-Rusian chronology and the nature of political relations between these nations; see, e.g., V. Ja. Petrućkin, “O russkom kaganate, nachalnom letopisanii, poiskakh i nedoRazumenijakh v noveishei istoriografii,” *Slavjanovedenie* 4 (2001): 78–82; and C. Zuckerman, “On the Date of the Khazars’ Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor,” *Revue des études byzantines* 53 (1995): 237–70.

²³ D. Abramovič and D. Tsciżewskij (eds.), *Das Paterikon des Kiever Hoehlenklosters (Slavische Propylaen 2)* (München, 1964), 65.

²⁴ *Polnoe sobranie* pp. 2.10; 7.25.

of Rus'” in *Sefer ha-Shoham* by R. Moshe ben Yitzhak.²⁵ Chernigov is explicitly mentioned in the same *Sefer ha-Shoham*, where “R. Yitzhak of Sernigov” is quoted as an authority in the Slavic language.²⁶ In the region of Tmutorokan', when it was governed by East Slavic princes, there is no evidence for Jewish settlement, although in the periods of Khazarian and Byzantine rule Jews definitely lived there, according to Hebrew, Arabic, and Byzantine sources.²⁷ A Jewish presence in Volhynia is mentioned in Slavic sources only once²⁸ but is well corroborated by several Jewish sources.²⁹ However, there is no mention of Jews in Novgorod, not even as visitors, until the fifteenth century.³⁰

D. Occupations

As far as vocational occupations are concerned, it is possible to define the referred-to individuals as: (a) merchants: “and also from the place of Rus' from the elders [of the community], merchants came [here]”³¹ (b) moneylenders: “In the spring, Gachna the Tatar with the Jew the moneylender came to the [town of] Kashin and caused many troubles to Kashin,”³² (c) probably “court Jews,”³³ (d) teachers and paid cantors: “In most places in Poland and Rus' and Hungary in which, due to their

²⁵ See S. Ettinger, “Moses of Kiev,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* 12 (Jerusalem, 1971–1992), 433.

²⁶ B. Klar (ed.) *Sefer ha-Shoham (The Onix Book)* Vol. I (London, 1947), 142; C. Roth, “Moses ben Isacc Nessiah and his Work, the *Sefer of Shoham*” in *Sefer ha-Shoham (The Onix Book)* Vol. I, ed. B. Klar (London, 1947), 5–16: 11. For attempts to identify R. Yitzhak with other Jews with the same name, see A. Drabkin, “Itse (Isaak) iz Chernigova,” *Evrejskaja Entsiklopedija* 8 (1904): 523; J. Jackobs, *The Jews of Angeuin England: Documents and Records* (New York, 1893), 73; Ta-Shma, “On the History of Polish Jewry,” 363.

²⁷ See below; Theophanes, *Chronography*, in *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883–1885), 357; Ibn alFakih, *Kitab albuldan*, in *Ibn alFakih, Kitab albuldan (BGA V)*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1885), 271.

²⁸ *Hypatian Chronicle*, under the year 1288 (*Polnoe sobranie*, 2.220).

²⁹ For details see Kulik, “Earliest Evidence.” For Jews of Volhynia in the period see Ms Paris 380, A. Grossman, *The Early Sages of France* (Jerusalem, 1995), 135 (Hebrew); *Sefer ha-Zekhira* by R. Efraim of Bonn, A. M. Habermann, *The Persecutions in Germany and France* (Jerusalem, 1945), 128 (Hebrew); *Or Zarua* by R. Hayim ben Yitzhak, 157; Ta-Shma, “On the History of Polish Jewry,” 361–2.

³⁰ Jews visiting Novgorod are mentioned for the first time in the *First Novgorodian Chronicle*, year 1445 (*Polnoe sobranie*, 3.240; 4.124; 17.187).

³¹ J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature* (Cincinnati, 1931–1935), 1.50, ll. 44–5. The fragment dealing with the dispute between the Rabbanites and the Karaites is dated to the eleventh century.

³² *Polnoe sobranie*, 15.414.

³³ This anachronistic definition refers here to Anbal Jasin, a controversial courtier

difficult situations, there are no Torah scholars, they hire as knowledgeable a man as they can find, and he becomes their cantor and teacher of righteousness, and he teaches their sons.”³⁴

E. Community

One might have assumed that the above-mentioned sources are descriptive only of isolated individuals, were it not for the fact that several sources cite the existence of a communal structure, at least in Kiev and in Volhynia. See use of the terms *parnas*,³⁵ “elders of the community,”³⁶ “community of Rus’” (קהל רוסיא).³⁷

Hints to the existence of communal institutions in Vladimir can also be found in the responsum in *Or Zarua* by R. Hayim ben Yitzhak of the thirteenth century (where both Vladimir and Kholm of Vohlynia are mentioned):

The husband gave the divorce letter to Shemuel ha-Kohen and said: “I appoint you messenger to bring the divorce letter to my wife wherever she may be until she receives the letter from you.” And finally, we have sent to Vladimir for the woman and the messenger, so that she could be divorced here, and we insisted that he [her husband] shall give her divorce by himself. However, he did not want to do so. Therefore, we also ordained that he be sent for from the town Kholm.³⁸

F. Cultural Activity

We know of the activity of several emigrants from Rus’ in Germany, France, England, and Spain.³⁹ Evidence of cultural endeavors in Rus’ per se is limited to two facts: (a) The composing of a commentary on the Pentateuch, the *Sefer Ruseina* (known also as ‘Rushaina’—ספר רושיינא) by Rabbi Samuel ‘of Rus’ (ברושיא) which is dated to the year 1124. Facts regarding the origin of the book and its author are the subject

of Andrej Bogolubskij of Vladimir in Suzdal (*Polnoe sobranie* 2.114–115; 5.164–165); see Kulik, “The Earliest Evidence.”

³⁴ *Or Zarua* by Isaac ben Moses of Vienna (1, 113).

³⁵ “Kievan Letter,” I. 25, 30 (Golb, Pritsak, *Khazarian*, 14).

³⁶ Mann, *Texts*, 1.50, ll. 44–5.

³⁷ A. Marmorstein, “Nouveaux renseignements sur Tobiya ben Eliézer,” *Revue des études juives* 73 (1921): 92–7; J. Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*, (London, 1920–1922), 2.192.

³⁸ *Or Zarua* by R. Hayim ben Yitzhak, 157; also Ta-Shma, “On the History of Polish Jewry,” 361–2.

³⁹ Berlin, “Evrei,” 149–54.

of controversy. The book preserved the Italian tradition with a lot of Italian glosses, and Weinryb not too convincingly suggests that its author must have also been Italian,⁴⁰ (b) Jewish involvement in translations in the period preceding the activity of the Judaisers, the fifteenth century, and in later translations from Lithuania.⁴¹ This involvement was reflected in translations from Hebrew (and possibly also from Judeo-Greek).⁴² The transmission of some of these compositions supposedly translated from Hebrew is the subject of debate. Among those phenomena in which persons with a knowledge of Hebrew are clearly involved are the insertion of excerpts of the Hebrew *Book of Yosippon* into an early East Slavic chronography and Hebrew-based glosses to Slavic translations of the Septuagint.⁴³

G. *Relations with the Christian Environment*

Local Jews were apparently fluent in the language of their Eastern Slavic neighbors. One source even implies Slavic as the single spoken language: "M. anon. son of anon., who is from the community of Rus' ... knows neither the holy language nor the Greek language, and not Arabic, either, but only the "language of Canaan,"⁴⁴ spoken by the people of his native land."⁴⁵ This evidence is supported by the numerous Slavic names and nicknames (ranging from the Kievan Letter of the tenth century⁴⁶ to Lithuanian documents of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries)⁴⁷ as well as the so-called "Slavic glosses," i.e., Slavic words and expressions, which include East Slavic forms that are found in abundance in the contemporary Hebrew literature.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Weinryb, "The Myth." For edition see M. Weiss, *Sefer Rushaina* (Jerusalem, 1976–1997) (Hebrew).

⁴¹ Altbauer, Taube, *The Slavonic Book*.

⁴² See below.

⁴³ See Alekseev, "Perevod"; Ibid, "Russko-evrejskie"; Alexeev, *Tekstologija*; Lunt, Taube, "Early East Slavic Translations."

⁴⁴ On the term "language of Canaan" applied to different Slavic dialects in the Middle Ages, see M. Weinreich, "Yiddish, Knaanic, Slavic: The Basic Relationships," *For Roman Jakobson*, (The Hague, 1956), 622–32; R. Jakobson, M. Halle, "The Term Canaan in Medieval Hebrew," *For Max Weinreich on his Seventieth Birthday* (The Hague, 1964), 147–72.

⁴⁵ Marmorstein, "Nouveaux renseignements," 95; Mann, *The Jews*, 2.192.

⁴⁶ A. L. Torpusman, "Antroponimija i etnicheskie kontakty narodov Vostochnoj Evropy v srednie veka," *Imja – Etnos – Istorija* (Moskva, 1989), 48–53.

⁴⁷ Bershads'kij, *Dokumenty i materialy; Regesty i nadpisi*, 1.68ff.

⁴⁸ Garkavi, *Ob jazyke*; R. Jakobson, "Iz razyskanij nad starocheshskimi glossami v srednevekovykh evrejskikh pamjatnikakh," *Slavica Hierosolimitana* VII (1985): 45–6.

The anti-Jewish polemic assumed an important place in the emerging East Slavic literature from the eleventh century onwards.⁴⁹ Apparently, this was not merely a rhetorical exercise or an influence of the Byzantine tradition, because the existence of the polemic in reality is also reflected in the contemporary hagiography.⁵⁰ Clear conclusions on the nature of the polemic and its connection to reality may be reached only after publication of critical editions of at least such major compositions of this polemic as *Palaia Interpretata*, and comprehensive study of their sources.⁵¹

II. THE ORIGIN OF THE JEWS OF RUS' AND THE "BYZANTINE TRACES"

Clarification of the origin of the Jews of medieval Rus' constitutes a key problem in the determination of the sources of Eastern European Jewry as a whole. It may be stated that in the mid-fourteenth century, the era of the separate existence of the Jews of Rus' came to an end, at least politically, and possibly also culturally, and a process of their acculturation was initiated among the bearers of the Ashkenazi culture who were arriving in Poland and Lithuania from the West. Thus, long before the divisions of Poland in the eighteenth century and the beginning of the new era in the history of the descendants of the Jews of Rus', we find in the region a Jewish population with a uniform Ashkenazi culture and, with barely any trace of the unique tradition of its ancestors.⁵²

⁴⁹ Beginning from the *Sermon on Law and Grace* by Illarion, considered to be the first original literary composition of Eastern Slavs.

⁵⁰ See above; *Life of Theodosius* (Abramovič, Tscižewskij, *Paterikon*, 65).

⁵¹ Meanwhile only single versions have been published. See *Paleja tolkovaja po spisku sdelannomu v g. Kolomne v 1406 g. Trud učenikov N. S. Tichonravova* (Moskva, 1892–6); *Tolkovaja paleja 1477 goda, Izdanija Obščestva ljubitelej dRevneRusskoj pis'mennosti*, V. 93 (St. Petersburg, 1893); A. M. Kamchatnov et alii (eds.), *Paleja tolkovaja* (Moskva, 2002); I. Evseev, "Slovesa svjatykh prorok—protivoiudejskij pamjatnik po rukopisi XV veka," *Drevnosti. Trudy Slavjanskoi Kommissii Imperatorskago Moskovskago Archeologičeskago Obščestva* 4/1 (Moskva, 1907), 153–200. Important recent research on the East Slavic anti-Jewish polemic was published by A. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin Without a Cat: Adversus Judaeos Texts in the Literature of Medieval Russia (988–1504)* (Lund, 2002).

⁵² For remainders of the evidence in late source originating most probably in oral tradition see Y. B. Levinson, *Teuda be-Israel* (Wilna, 1828), 35 (Hebrew); Garkavi, *Ob jazyke evreev*, 7–9.

Was the tradition of the Jews of Kievan Rus' very different from that of the Jews of Ashkenaz? If so, what was it, and what was the origin of this community? What was its relative size among other components of Polish-Lithuanian Jewry? There are no unequivocal answers to these fundamental questions, as long as we are relying on the extant sources. Due to the paucity of evidence of Jewish population movements during the period and the region in question, we have to rely solely on *cultural characteristics*, which do not necessarily indicate the origin of the *whole* group under discussion.

The numerous hypotheses about the origin of the Jews of Rus' are characterized in detail by Berlin and Weinryb⁵³ and we will not elaborate on these well-known facts and sources. Most of the hypotheses only offer possible routes for the arrival of the Jews in territories of Rus' before or after its political self-determination, without reliance on reliable sources. These are the cases of the "Caucasian theory," based only on Jewish presence in the region near the territory in question,⁵⁴ or the "Persian theory," based on the sources from the sixteenth and even the eighteenth century, which purportedly provide evidence about the eighth century.⁵⁵ The "Khazarian" and "Canaanite" theories, which are based on an assumption of a mass conversion of Turkic or Slavic tribes in Khazaria, not only do not offer adequate evidence of the phenomenon, but also fail to explain the origin of those performing the conversions.⁵⁶ Turkic and Slavic names that appear in the Kievan Letter are not indicative of the ethnic origin of their bearers, especially when some of them attribute themselves to dynasties descended from Levi and Aaron.⁵⁷ The same is true for evidence of the use of or familiarity with the Slavic language among the Jews. The dating of this evidence and the clarification of the language reflected in these sources (Czech, apparently, in the majority of them) require additional study.⁵⁸

⁵³ Berlin, *Istoricheskie sud'by*; Weinryb, "The Beginnings of East European Jewry."

⁵⁴ A. Ja. Harkavi, *Jews and Slavonic Language* (Wilna, 1867), 110 (Hebrew).

⁵⁵ *Emek ha-Bakha*: 19–20; Berlin, "Evrei," 9, 31–2.

⁵⁶ K. F. Neuman, *Die Volker der südlichen Russlands in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, (Leipzig, 1855); E. Renan, *Le Judaisme comme race et comme religion* (Paris, 1883), 25ff; M. Gumplovicz, *Początki religii żydowskiej w Polsce* (Warszawa, 1903); Kuchera, *Die Chasaren*; Poliak, *Khazaria*, 255–75.

⁵⁷ On Turkic and Slavic names see Golb, Pritsak, *Khazarian*, 26–9: 35–40; Torpusman, "Antroponimija."

⁵⁸ Garkavi, *Ob jazyke*; Weinreich, "Yiddish"; Jakobson, "Iz razyskanij."

However, there are three possibilities for the origin of the Jews of Rus' that are supported in some manner by credible documentary sources: (a) Ashkenaz, (b) Islamic lands, (c) and Byzantium.

The "Western theory," which is dominant among scholars, was evidently conditioned by the cultural situation at the time the research was being conducted, that is to say, a uniformly Ashkenazi image of Eastern European Jewry in the modern period. This theory comprises two main assumptions: (a) migration from Germany and France during the Crusades, (b) settlement along trade routes or destinations.⁵⁹ The first hypothesis is not documented; nor does it cover the period prior to the Crusades. We have in our possession only evidence of Jewish trade between Rus' and Ashkenaz (which speaks of הולכי רוסיא 'travelers to Rus'' or הולכי דרכי רוסיא 'travelers of the routes to Rus'' among the other non-Jewish *Ruzarii*)⁶⁰ and of visits or migration of the Jews of Rus' to Western Europe, not only to Ashkenaz but also to England and Spain.⁶¹ None of this evidence predates the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, although the presence of Jews in the territories of Rus' was already documented in the tenth century. The only early evidence is the well-known report from the ninth century about the Rhodanites, whose route passed through Khazaria. However, ascribing the origin of the Rhodanites to Western Europe raises many doubts, and it is possible that their roots, in fact, lie in Islamic lands.⁶²

Jewish migration from the Islamic lands to Khazaria in the ninth century was cited on two occasions ("from the lands of Islam" in al-Masudi's *Muruj al-Dahab*,⁶³ and "from Baghdad and Horasan" in the

⁵⁹ I. M. Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten IX* (Berlin, 1826); H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1853–1876), 6.69; I. Schipper, *Anfänge des Kapitalismus bei den abendlandschen Juden um frühesten Mittelalter* (Wien, 1907), 19; J. Brutzkus, "Pershi zivistki pro evreiv u Polshi ta na Rusi," *Istrichna sektsija AN URSR. Naukovyj sbornik na rik 1927 XXVI* (Kiev, 1927), 3–11; cf. Y. Lebanon, *The Jewish Travelers in the Twelfth Century* (Lanham, 1980), 342–3.

⁶⁰ A common medieval term for European merchants trading with Rus' (J. Brutzkus "Trade with Eastern Europe, 800–1200," *The Economic History Review XIII*/1–2 (1943): 31–41, esp. 35).

⁶¹ Brutzkus, "Pershi"; "Der Handel der westeuropaeischen Juden mit dem Kiev," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland III* (1931): 97–110; idem, "Trade"; Berlin, "Evrei," 149–54.

⁶² M. Gil, *In the Kingdom of Ishmael during the Period of Geonim*, 4 vols. (Tel-Aviv, 1997), 611–35 (Hebrew).

⁶³ C. Pellat (ed.), *Muruj alDahab* (Beyruth, 1966), 212–3.

Schechter Text),⁶⁴ and always proximate to the mention of migration from Byzantium. The distribution of these Jews in Khazaria is unclear, and it is possible that they were concentrated in eastern parts of the territories of Khazaria, adjacent to Islamic lands that were not subsequently included in Rus'. The link between the communities of "Babylon" (Mesopotamia) and Rus' was documented on two occasions: (a) Rabbi Moshe Taku in his book *Ktav Tamim*, refers to a Karaite book that "came from Babylon to Rus', and from Rus' it was brought to Regespurk [Regensburg]",⁶⁵ (b) and the responsum of Samuel ben Ali of Baghdad, directed to R. Moshe of Kiev, who was known to be a student of R. Jacob ben Meir Tam (Rabbenu Tam), and thus the response could be sent not to Rus', but to Champagne.⁶⁶

In contrast to these hypotheses, the "Byzantine theory" seems to stand alone in terms of its support in the sources, and it is my intent to supplement them.⁶⁷ Whereas in relation to Ashkenaz as the place of origin of the Jews of Rus' we can only offer evidence on the communication between scholars or commercial contacts (of the kinds found between diverse communities),⁶⁸ and in the instance of "Babylon" only Jewish migration to the cities of Khazaria and a single piece of evidence on literary exchange are attested, the presence of Byzantine Jewry in Rus' is expressed in more aspects. The sources in our possession refer to (a) an autochthonous Judeo-Greek population in Rus', (b) migration of Byzantine Jews into territories of Rus' prior to its political formation, (c) contacts between Jews of Rus' and Byzantium and with Jewish communities there, (d) contacts between Byzantine Jews and Rus', and (e) Judeo-Greek cultural activity in Rus'.

⁶⁴ 1 verso, line 14. "Shechter Text" or "Cambridge Document" are common titles for a fragment of a Hebrew excursus into Khazarian history dated to the tenth century, found in Cairo Geniza and published by S. Schechter, "An Unknown Khazar Document," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 3 (1912): 181-219.

⁶⁵ Ms Paris H711, f. 28 (for facsimile edition see J. Dan, *Ktav Tamim*, Jerusalem 1984 (Hebrew)).

⁶⁶ Ettinger, "Moses."

⁶⁷ The "Byzantine theory" was introduced by Graetz, *Geschichte*, (5.166-167, 188-189) and S. Kraus, *Studien zur Byzantisch-Judischen Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1914).

⁶⁸ See, e.g., S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley, 1967-1984), 42-59.

A. *Autochthonous Judeo-Greek Population*

One of the most likely places of the origin of the Greek-speaking Jews in the principalities of Rus' could be the city and principality of Tmutorokan', which is located on the coast of the Taman Strait between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and included Phanagoria and Tamatarcha of Greek sources, 'Samkerç' (סמקרץ) in the King Joseph letter from the "Jewish-Khazar correspondence," סמקריו/סמקריו in the Schechter Text, "Jewish Samkresh" in Ibn al-Faqih. Tmutorokan' became one of the most important centers in Kievan Rus', close in importance to Kiev and at times even competing with it. The city and the region (we are referring to two coastlines of the Taman Strait that were in the past part of the Bosphor kingdom) are known for their ancient Hellenistic Jewish tradition. The continued presence of Jews there was also documented after the Hellenistic era and until the period under discussion. Even without taking into account material from the inscriptions from the Crimea that were recognized by Chwolson as original,⁶⁹ the Jews in this region are also mentioned by Theophanes in *Chronography* under the year 678/9/6170, who speaks of "Phanagoria and the Jews who live there,"⁷⁰ and by Ibn al-Faqih in *Kitab al-Buldan*, who calls one of the towns there "Jewish Samkersh."⁷¹ Nor is there any reason to doubt the identification of the Jews of Tmutorokan' with Byzantine-Greek culture, since regardless of the relatively brief periods when Tmutorokan' was ruled by Khazars or East Slavic princes, the region was situated within the political and cultural boundaries of Byzantium.⁷²

B. *Migration of the Jews of Byzantium to Territories of Khazaria*

It may be assumed that aside from the Byzantine Jews of Tmutorokan', Rus' also inherited the Jewish population that had occupied the territories of former Khazaria. In various sources, the origin of the Jews of Khazaria was defined as Byzantine. Al-Masudi attributes the migration of the Jews of Byzantium to Khazaria to the persecutions of

⁶⁹ A. Ja. Garkavi, "Evreiskie nadgrobnnye pamjatniki, najdennye na Tamanskom poluostrove," *Evreiskie Zapiski* 5 (1881): 313–8; B. D. Chwolson, *Corpus Inscriptionum Hebraicarum* (St. Petersburg, 1882).

⁷⁰ de Boor (ed.), *Theophanis*, 357.

⁷¹ de Goeje (ed.), *Ibn alFakih*, 271.

⁷² M. I. Artamonov, *Istorija khazar* (Leningrad, 1962), 438–56; O. Pritsak, *The Origins of Rus'* (Cambridge, 1981), 68; Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic," 10.

Romanos I.⁷³ The Schechter Text also refers to “persecutions in the days of Romanos the Evil”⁷⁴ separately from the report on Jewish migration: “And the Jews began to come from Baghdad and from Horasan and from the land of Greece.”⁷⁵ The location defined as ארמניא—the initial place of origin of the Jews of Khazaria,⁷⁶ which is identified by Golb and Pritsak as ‘Armenia’—may also refer to Byzantium (metathetic רומניא ‘Romania’).⁷⁷ The banishing of the Jews of Byzantium to Khazaria “in the days of Haroun al-Rashid” is also referred to by al-Dimashqi in *Cosmography*.⁷⁸

The Schechter Text, which is attributed to a Jew from Khazaria, also preserves some signs of Greek ethnographic and geographical traditions.⁷⁹ And there are those who assume that its original was even written in Greek.⁸⁰

C. Byzantium and Rus’ Unified in Jewish Sources

Following the Christianization of Rus’ in 988, its political, economic, and cultural connections with Byzantium grew stronger. The new situation, as well as the links between Jews of the two states, was reflected in Jewish sources from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. And it may be assumed that this situation might have secured a certain role to those Jews who subscribed to the Greek culture and who were already in Rus’, or might have created conditions for an additional wave of migration.

The Hebrew term כנען יוון literally “Greek Canaan” meaning “Greek-Slavic lands,” *Slavia Graeca*, is attested in the response given by R. Judah ben Meir ha-Kohen in *Sefer ha-Dinim* that is quoted in *Or Zarua* by R. Isaac ben Moses of Vienna (1, 196). It evidently refers to Rus’, in order to differentiate it from “Canaan”—the western Slavic lands.⁸¹ Byzantium and Rus’ are mentioned together in *Eben ha-Ezer*

⁷³ *Muruj al-Dahab* (Pellat (ed.), *Muruj*, 212–3).

⁷⁴ 2 recto, line 16.

⁷⁵ 1 verso, line 14.

⁷⁶ 1 recto, line 1.

⁷⁷ Berlin, “Evrei,” 23–34, note 4; 30.

⁷⁸ A. F. Mehren (ed.), *Cosmographie de Dimichqui* (St. Petersburg, 1866), 263.

⁷⁹ P. B. Golden, “A New Discovery: Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 8 (1984): 474–86.

⁸⁰ P. Kokovtsov, *Evrejsko-khazar-skaja perepiska v X veke* (Leningrad, 1932), xxvii.

⁸¹ For the Hebrew term “Canaan” regularly referring to different Slavic lands in the Middle Ages, see H. Jakobson, “The Term Canaan.” For alternative interpretations of

by R. Eliezer ben Natan: "In Rus' and in the land of Greece, there are devout individuals on whose gates and on the doors of their homes and in the walls of their homes they put idolatry [signs]," "עדילרין" [kind of shoes] that are not cross-bred, as they do in the land of Greece and in Kias [= Kiev], I have seen in which they do not have leather on top."⁸²

D. *Jews of Rus' in Byzantine Communities*

The Jews of Rus' as guests of Byzantine communities are mentioned twice in sources that have already been quoted. In the first instance, they appear as merchants: "and also from the place of Rus', from elders [of the community], merchants [came] and heard what was written in the letter."⁸³ In the second document, the initial objective of the visit is not clarified, but it apparently refers to a familial relationship between the Jews of Rus' and Salonica (cited above): "M. Anon. son of Anon., who is from the community of Rus' and was a visitor among us, the community of Salonica, 'the young in the flock,' and found his relative Rabbi Anon. coming from Jerusalem." However, as mentioned in continuation, this visitor "does not know the holy language or the Greek language or Arabic."⁸⁴

E. *The Jews of Byzantium and the Slave Trade from Rus'*

Participation of the Byzantine Jews in slave trade from Rus' is referred to in both a Jewish source and a Slavic source, both of which relate to the eleventh century.⁸⁵

F. *Jews of Byzantium and East Slavic Literature*

The combination of the evidence cited above enables us to assume the physical presence and economic activity of Jews of Byzantine ori-

יין כנען in this responsum, see J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire (691-1204)* (Athens, 1939), 192-3; F. Kupfer and T. Lewicki, *Źródła hebrajskie do dziejów Słowian i niektórych innych ludów środkowej i wschodniej Europy* (Wrocław-Warszawa, 1956), 40-9.

⁸² Kupfer, Lewicki *Źródła*, 129-36.

⁸³ Mann, *Texts*, 1.50, lines 44-45. Cf. evidence on East Slavic merchants in Byzantium in A. Vasiliev, "Economic Relations between Byzantium and Old Russia," *Journal of Economic and Business History* 4 (1931-1932).

⁸⁴ Marmorstein, "Nouveaux renseignements," p. 95; Mann, *The Jews*, 2.192.

⁸⁵ *Sefer ha-Dinim* by R. Judah ben Meir ha-Kohen quoted in *Or Zarua* by R. Isaac ben Moses of Vienna (1, 196; cf. above); Abramovič, Tsciżewskij, *Paterikon*, 106-8.

gin in Rus'. Until now, the missing link has been the expression of their presence in cultural activity.⁸⁶ We cannot expect much progress in research in this field without the addition of new sources, such as occurred with the publication of the Schechter Text in 1912, or the Kievan Letter by Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak in 1982.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, there are other sources that are well-known in other research areas but which have not found their way into the accepted corpus of historical evidence for our subjects. This derives from the fact that these texts do not include direct evidence; rather, they conceal within them data about their creators, which must be drawn out by means of precise interpretation that necessitates data and tools from diverse fields of research. It happens that focusing the scholarly debate on certain texts that have been available to researchers for many years can in fact lead to upheavals in the field, to the same extent as archaeological or paleographic discoveries. I refer to certain East Slavic versions of the biblical books from the period in question that are characterized by two seemingly contradictory features. On the one hand, it could be stated with certainty that they were *translated from Greek*, but on the other hand, the translations possess a decidedly *Jewish character*. At least two such texts may be named: the early Slavic Book of Esther and the Pentateuch.⁸⁸ There is no doubt that the sources of these translations are Jewish-Greek texts, and it is very reasonable to assume that they were directly conveyed to Slavic translators by Greek-speaking Jews,⁸⁹ as it is difficult to explain this unique phenomenon through Christian Greek mediation, because: (a) these sources were not found among Christian Greek books, (b) they also had a common and accepted substitute in the Christian tradition. Thus, there is a very low probability of the existence of all the conditions required for this sort of mediation—from the transfer of texts of Jewish character to

⁸⁶ For possible remainders of Judeo-Greek legacy in Eastern Yiddish, see M. Weinreich, *History of Yiddish Language*, 1–4 (New York, 1973), 86–7 (Yiddish); P. Wexler, *Explorations in Judeo-Slavic Linguistics* (Leiden, 1987), 13–58.

⁸⁷ Schechter, "An Unknown"; Golb, Pritsak, *Khazarian*.

⁸⁸ Philological arguments in favor of a unique destiny of these documents may be found in A. Kulik, "O nesokhranivshejsja grecheskoj knige Esfiri," *Slavjanovedenie* 2 (1995): 76–9; and "Judeo-Greek Legacy in Medieval Rus'," *Viator* 39.1 (2008): 51–64. Neither numerous Jewish pseudepigrapha preserved in Slavic translations, nor Slavic Josephus, containing unique and important traditions can be reckoned in this group, at least at this stage of research.

⁸⁹ Most probably Jews just transmitted the manuscripts. It is less probable that the Jews translated the texts by themselves.

Christian Byzantine libraries, to the transfer of the same texts to Rus'.⁹⁰ It is difficult now to reconstruct the exact circumstances that led to the transmission of the Judeo-Greek *Vorlagen* of these two texts to Slavic scribes. It may be assumed that contact with the Jews—the local representatives of Byzantine culture—and access to their book collections, was at a certain stage more readily available than was contact with distant Constantinople. This assumption would enable us to raise the question about the existence of a “Jewish channel” in the cultural interference in the framework of the Byzantine *Kulturbereich*, and specifically of Byzantine influence in Rus' in the earliest stage of its cultural development. It should also be considered that traces of evidence of cooperation of this sort along the margins of the Byzantine cultural realm, can, in certain contexts, shed light on the reality at its center. Similar instances of Jewish-Christian cultural partnership, as reflected also in translation activity (from Hebrew), have been documented in Rus' from at least the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries.⁹¹ It is now clear that some of these instances were carried out by proponents of the movement of Judaizers in the State of Moscow, who apparently maintained ideological and cultural contacts with the Jews of Lithuanian Rus'.⁹² The question of whether the material introduced above may be linked to the scant evidence on Jewish-Christian groups in Byzantium, on the one hand, and/or with Jewish-Christian contacts in Rus' at a later period, on the other hand, requires additional study.

⁹⁰ We have to presume that the Byzantine influence in Rus' normally occurred through official routes. We also do not know much about the Judeo-Christian groups in Byzantium (see, e.g., S. Pines, S. Shaked, “Fragment of a Jewish-Christian Composition from the Cairo Geniza,” in *Studies of Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of Prof. D. Ayalon*, ed. Moshe Sharon (Jerusalem, 1968), 307–18).

⁹¹ Alekseev, “Perevody”; “Russko-evrejskie literaturnye svjazi”; Lunt, Taube, “Early East Slavic Translations”; Taube, “O genezise”; idem, “On some unidentified”; idem, “On the Slavic”; idem, “The Fifteenth-Century Ruthenian Translation”; idem, “Which Hebrew Text.”

⁹² See idem, “The Fifteenth-Century Ruthenian Translations.” Some of them might also have had Byzantine connections, most probably through the Crimean communities; see S. Cinberg, “Avraam Krymskij i Moisej Kievskij,” *Evrejskaia starina* 11 (1924): 93–109; Taube, “Which Hebrew Text,” 48–50.

PART II

CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS AND TRANSMISSION
OF KNOWLEDGE

PIYYUT IN BYZANTIUM: A FEW REMARKS

Joseph Yahalom

Liturgical poetry is commonly regarded as the most intimate, secluded, and typical domain of the spiritual life of the Jewish people in every age. It is the most direct, the purest, and the most original reflection of the people's soul and of the wishes of the Rabbis after the destruction of the Temple, and no one has ever entertained the thought that it was affected by foreign influence. The notion that it might have been shaped by a foreign model or that it could have been the product of some interaction with an alien culture is, as it were, inconceivable.

It is hardly necessary to say that if that assumption is reasonable, the opposite assumption is no less unreasonable—perhaps even more so: it would be far-fetched to suggest that Christian sacred poetry was influenced by *piyyut*. The consistent hostility and contempt with which ancient Christianity regarded Judaism did not encourage open spiritual contact or ease in absorbing influences between the religions, especially not in the church, the center with a higher concentration than anywhere else of alienation and revulsion from the competing culture.¹

Indeed, in the Jewish poetry of Palestine in the Byzantine period one must discern two strata, which are rather distant from one another. Only one of these, the Hebrew stratum, was used in worship in the synagogue. By contrast, its Aramaic counterpart enjoyed an independent life of its own. It was used in private events: in nuptial songs for wedding parties and for eulogies. The Greek words that slipped into that Aramaic poetry sometimes represented the most inward areas of Jewish spiritual life.

The term *nómos*, referring to the Law of Moses and not simply to any law or custom, was in wide use among Hellenistic Jews (Philo) and in Christian writings, but in an Aramaic poem from the Byzantine period found in the Cairo Geniza, Jacob is referred to as one

¹ See E. Fleischer, "Early Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in its Cultural Setting (Comparative Experiments)," in *Moises Starosta Memorial Lectures*, ed., J. Geiger (Jerusalem, 1993), 63–4 (Hebrew).

who studies Torah, and called: “קרא בנומוס” (“The one reading the *nómos*”).² In Midrash, the word נִימוֹס is used by non-Jews to designate the Law of Moses. Thus, for example, the Archon who ignored the insult to his dignity even when Rabbi Yoḥanan did not stand up for him, used the phrase “נימוסיה דבריה” when he said, “Let him alone, he is engaged in the teachings of his God” (JT Brakhot 5:1,9a; and cf. JT Rosh Hashana 4:8;59c). In its ordinary meaning as “law” or “custom,” the word frequently refers to gentile law. Thus, we have the common expressions “the laws of the gentiles, the nations, the slaves” (‘עבדיה’, ‘אומיה’, ‘נימוסי עממיה’). This is apparently the meaning of Rabbi Meir’s proverb: “עלת לקרתה הלך בנימוסה” (“When you go up to a city, walk in its ways,” Breshit Raba 48:14 p. 491).³ Indeed, there is no apparent reason to refer to the words of the Torah with the word “נימוס,” especially since Judaism has so many words of its own to denote that subject, which is so essential to it. The attitude reflected in Hebrew poetry, as opposed to its Aramaic counterpart, appears much more understandable.

Hebrew *piyyut* shows great sensitivity to the sounds of foreign words and consistently refrains from using them. Although their echo is heard, here, too, they function differently, more subtly: not specifically in the presence of the sound of foreign words but rather in foreign syntactic combinations of Hebrew words. Thus, for example, the unusual pair of words, “לא-נכתבִים” (not-written) represents the Greek phrase “ἄγραφοι νόμοι” Did the Palestinian *payyetan* Yannai, writing in the sixth century, really think that this phrase was particularly elegant when he used it for the decidedly Jewish concept of “the Oral Law”? Similarly, regarding another authentic Jewish concept, the oath, which in the Greek of the Church Fathers is called, “εὐλογία”, that is to say “beautiful” (εὐ-), followed by *logos* with the abstract suffix -ία. It appears that the Jewish poet, Yehuda, who might have lived in southern Italy, used this Greek locution when, in his Hebrew *piyyut*, he spoke of a man who hastily annuls his wife’s oaths.

² M. Sokoloff and J. Yahalom, eds., *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Poetry from Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1999), 264 (Hebrew, Aramaic).

³ J. Theodor and C. Albeck, eds., *Berešit rabba* (Jerusalem, 1965); and cf. M. A. Friedman, *Jewish Marriage in Palestine: A Cairo Genizah Study* (Tel-Aviv, 1980), 474–5.

טס וְגַעַר אֹתָהּ
לְבַטֵּל... יוֹפֵי-דְבוּר-מִלְתָּהּ

He flew and scolded her
To annul the beauty-speech of her word

(Yehuda, 75)⁴

Now we will not at all be surprised if loan-translations of Greek locutions were used in Hebrew poetry to refer to matters beyond the confines of Judaism.

The Judean Desert has been known for its fanatic hermits from time immemorial. In times of crisis, the monks would appear *en masse* in the cities to exert influence on the rulers' decisions. They were conspicuous because of the coarse cloaks they wore on their skin, which is why they were called "wearers of sack-cloth" (σακκοφόροι) When an ancient Hebrew *payyetan* wished to arouse his listeners' spirits with a prayer for the Day of Atonement and to emphasize that the power of the Jewish priests, who wore cloaks, had passed from the Jews to a priesthood of a new kind, he expressed himself rhetorically:

פָּאָר לְבוּשֵׁי כוֹהֵן אֵין לָנוּ
וְלוֹבְשֵׁי שְׂקִים מְשָׁלוּ בָנוּ

The glory of the priestly raiment we have lost
And the dominion of the wearers of sack-cloth we have gained.

It goes without saying that the expressing "wearers of sack-cloth" can only be understood according to the Greek parallel (σακκοφόροι).⁵

An interesting reference to the contrast between the new ruling class of the monks and the veteran leaders, expressed prominently in dress, also emerges from the words of John Chrysostom at the end of the fourth century CE. After the profanation of the statue of the emperor in Antioch, the emperor was furious and intended to destroy the city. The ones who managed to placate him were in fact the monks, having nothing more than a mean garment, and not the well-dressed, veteran pagan leaders of the city. John Chrysostom followed this success with an enthusiastic sermon, asking with typical rhetorical devices:

⁴ W. J. Van Bekkum, ed., *Hebrew Poetry from Late Antiquity: Liturgical Poems of Yehuda* (Leiden, 1998).

⁵ On this topic see J. Yahalom, *The Language of the Ancient Palestinian Piyyut* (Jerusalem, 1984), 102-6, 124 (Hebrew).

Where now are those who are clad in threadbare cloaks, and display a long beard, and carry staves in the right hand; the philosophers of the world... All these men then forsook the city, they all hastened away, and hid themselves in caves!... the inhabitants of the city fled away to the mountains and to the deserts, but the citizens of the desert hastened into the city... The monks... having nothing more than a mean garment, who had lived in the coarsest manner, who seemed formerly to be nobodies, men habituated to mountains and forests... whilst all were fearing and quaking, stood forth and relieved the danger.⁶

As a language of culture, Greek had been used in Palestine along with Hebrew from time immemorial. It was not in vain that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi exclaimed: "In the Land of Israel, why use Syriac? Either the Holy Tongue or Greek" (Baba Kama 82b). However, because of its elevated liturgical character, Hebrew did not betray the linguistic influence of Greek and used only Greek loan-translations in the synagogue. It simply rejected borrowed words, though these are widely used in their prose sermons. The situation here became more complex because Aramaic was the spoken language, whose literary use was essentially in the popular sermon, where words borrowed from Greek had a significant place. A simpler form of diglossia existed within the Christian society in Palestine.

Within Christian society, two social strata definitely existed, and these could be distinguished clearly. One was represented by the high, cosmopolitan social class, which bore Greek culture in its Christian guise. This class had arisen throughout the East during the Hellenistic period and it continued to exist after the rise of Christianity. Its members were responsible, among other things, for the adaptation of pagan Greek culture to the new values and outlook of Christianity. Their language of education and culture was Greek, and they mastered it fully. In contrast to them, there were lower strata of society in the East, the local population, who spoke a Syriac dialect and were far from the higher Greek culture. Since they were Christians, these local people also took part in prayer in churches, but there was a barrier between them and the language of worship, which was Greek. This linguistic-

⁶ See Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IX, p. 454 (Concerning the Statues XVII, 5).

cultural barrier existed in Palestine from the beginning of the Byzantine period, and it was expressed prominently in the liturgy.⁷

The famous pilgrim, Egeria, who visited Palestine in 382–384, describes the bilingual situation of the Easter holiday in the church of Jerusalem, when the bishop gave his sermon. According to Egeria, he gave his sermon in Greek, but for the multitude a presbyter stood by his side and translated his words from Greek to Syriac, “so that everyone would understand the explanations.” A similar arrangement was made, according to Egeria’s report, for the passages read from scripture. Since they were supposed to be read in Greek, someone always stood there who would translate them into Syriac for the people, “so that they would always learn.”⁸ Evidence of the exploitation of this special bilingual situation is found in satirical writings by Jews that were preserved in the Geniza.

In a parody written for Purim, the evil Haman and all the evildoers in the world throughout history engage in a dispute. The participants are Nimrod, Pharaoh, Amalek, Sisra, Goliath, the black slave, Sennacherib, and, finally, Jesus. In the odd verses, each of the participants in the argument justifies Haman’s bitter fate in his confrontation with the Jews but bewails his own bitter fate in that confrontation. Haman, by contrast, in the even verses, justifies the torments of his evil comrade, and bitterly laments his own fate. One characteristic of this parody, in which the rhymes are repeatedly based on Greek words, is that many of these words are usually not found in Jewish sources. Thus, for example, Goliath says to Haman:

טפשא דכפר קרנוס / הויית צריר פורנוס / והיית טורנוס

Fool from the village of Karnos⁹ / You should be put in a furnace / And you wish to be a ruler? (*Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Poetry*, 210).

⁷ See M. Levi-Rubin, *The Latin Patriarchate after the Arab Conquest*, PhD Dissertation (Jerusalem, 1994), 320–35 (Hebrew).

⁸ See O. Limor, *Journeys in the Holy Land—Christian Pilgrims in Late Antiquity (Latin Descriptions of Journeys)*, (Jerusalem, 1998), 112–3 (Hebrew).

⁹ An epithet for Haman, who was born in the village of Karnos in the Beit Shean region (*Vayiqra rabba*, ed. M. Margoliot (New York, 1993), 28:6, 665. The place is also mentioned in a graffito. See Y. Zusman, “A Halakhic Inscription from the Beit Shean Valley—Preliminary Survey” *Tarbiz* 43 (1974): 115–7 (Hebrew). Midrash Vayiqra Raba also mentions that the man was an attendant whose job was to heat the furnace (φούρνος).

This is how he describes Jesus and his suffering:

סבִּיף באִיסקוטוס¹⁰ / מן אתא גִּינִיטוס¹¹ / וקרן יתי כריסטוס

Tortured by a whip / Born of a woman / And they called me Christ (the messiah)

(Ibid. p. 216)

Indeed, as the New Testament says, “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us” (Luke 23:39). In the Jewish-Christian debate, the Jews were the ones who mocked the crucified Jesus and shouted the words of Psalm 22 to him (“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”), which was interpreted to refer to the crucifixion: “He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let Him deliver him” (Ps. 22:9). Jews are also depicted in ninth-century Psalters as standing beneath the cross and pointing at the crucified Jesus with mockery. This is the spirit in which one must see Jesus’s complaint to the Jews: “And they called me Christ.”

The very fact that this scene was mentioned in a text meant for domestic Jewish use shows how aware the Jews were of their image in Christian society. In our context, the use of Greek words, laden with meaning, in a prominent place in the poem, the rhymed syllable, is indicative of the dialogue held by the Jews of Palestine with the Greek liturgical language. Detailed descriptions of the crucifixion are not known among the Jews aside from the Purim feast parody, exemplifying the strong need felt by the Jews to release their fears. The poet exploits the carnival atmosphere in order to describe the crucifixion: Jesus addresses Haman, saying, “You think that you were the only one who was crucified, but I shared your fate.”¹² However, most probably the parody was accompanied by acts or at least by their dramatic portrayal. The realistic context appears to emerge from legal formulations that forbid this Aramaic *purimspil* and everything associated with it. A novella by Theodosius II orders the heads of the Provinciae to forbid Jewish jests connected with Purim plays, which included the burning of the effigy of Haman on a cross. According to the wording of the

¹⁰ This refers to the Greek word σκῦτος.

¹¹ In the manuscript, it is written with the letter zayin, but it should read: γεννήτος.

¹² Regarding the tradition that the hanging of Haman was a crucifixion, cf. T. Thornton, “Crucifixion of Haman and the Scandal of the Cross,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, 37 (1986): 419–26.

law, this was connected with contempt for Christian faith, and the figure burned in effigy was an imitation of Jesus. Theodosius orders the governors of the provinces to "prohibit the Jews from setting fire to Aman... in a certain ceremony of their festival, and from burning, with sacrilegious intent, a form made to resemble the saint cross in contempt of the Christian faith, lest they mingle the sign of our faith with their jests."¹³ Aside from the parody, the penetration of Hellenism certainly included other areas of religious life beyond linguistic ones.

In the complex world of the Jews of Palestine, one of the most prominent rhetorical tools in representing their religious life was paradoxical formulation. In spiritual Christian sermons as well paradoxical elements provided a convenient means for shaping religious language in Christological disputes. In the continuous tradition of the sermon, Christian religious discourse abandoned intellectual expression in favor of mystical and metaphorical religious expression. By these means, Christianity sought to contend with the difficulty of representing that which cannot be described.

In order to understand how rhetorical paradox could have such a great influence on Christian education, we must turn to the Greek Church Fathers of Cappadocia at the end of the fourth century. In their writings, these Church Fathers validated the connection between pagan rhetoric and Christianity for the first time, maintaining that they had not been at all harmed by exposure to the rhetoric of pagan schools. Their success and that of their writings was so great that they served as an example for generations of Byzantine writers, who applied their rhetorical education to the composition of sermons, hagiography, and hymns.

The encounter between rhetoric and Christian scholarship ultimately took place in the sixth century in institutions such as the famous academy of rhetoric in Gaza, where the teachers were Christians. Procopius, the leading figure in that academy, was trained in the writing of rhetorical exercises just as he was trained in writing biblical commentaries. Indeed, the prestige and influence of rhetoric was particularly great in Gaza, and the antithetical form was even regarded as a method of thought transcending ordinary oratorical expression. The Greek Church Fathers made free use of antithesis to express the

¹³ See A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Michigan, 1987), 237 (translation by Linder, all other translations in this article are mine).

miraculous element and contradiction inherent in the human incarnation of their God. This permitted them to present unfamiliar mysteries with a linguistic and rhetorical convention with which their audience, educated in pagan schools, dealt with very well. Gregory of Nazianzus, one of the Cappadocian Fathers, made use of this method to indicate the dual nature of Jesus: human and divine. At the end of his sermon against the Arian Eunomius, he used a long series of pairs of opposites: "He was hungry but fed thousands... he was weary but he is the repose from weariness... he was revealed as weak and wounded, but he heals all illness and weakness... he is dead, but he brings to life, and in his death he puts death to death."

At the end of this list, Gregory apologizes, perhaps because he feared that his excessive use of antithetical formulations might be mistaken for empty rhetoric:

This is our answer to lovers of riddles. We did not do this willingly, because too much verbiage and antithesis are not suitable for believers... but we did it of necessity and because of our opponents... so that they will hear and know, that they are not wise about every matter, just as they are not undefeated in their abundant arguments, which make their message valueless.¹⁴

Lovers of riddles were probably quite common in that era.

The use of a repeated thematic word is very common in rhetoric, not only among the Jews but also among Christians. In Christian literature, there is a well-known literary genre known as *improperia*, which makes a constant comparison between what God did on behalf of Israel and what they did to Him. Among other things, they crucified Him. In this liturgical text, which is included in the Good Friday prayers, Jesus lists the benefits that he did for Israel in contrast to the harm they did to him. The passage is sung in the church by two alternating choruses.¹⁵ The repeated thematic words are the foundation stones of the comparison.

The greatest poet of the Byzantine church, some of whose poems are regarded as masterpieces of world literature, was Romanos the Melode, who was active in the mid-sixth century. He was born in Homs, Syria,

¹⁴ See PG 36, 100–101, and cf.: A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire, The Development of Christian Discourse* (University of California, 1991), 155–88. H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1981) 53–83.

¹⁵ For the early history of the genre, see E. Werner, "Melito of Sardes, The First Poet of Deicide," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 37 (1996): 191–210.

apparently as a Jew, and he converted to Christianity as an adult. After serving for some time as a priest in Beirut, he moved to Constantinople, where he became known as the greatest poet of the church. According to the story of his life, for which he was ultimately made a saint, he received his talent for writing miraculously and wrote a thousand metrical sermons, which are known as *kontakia*. Eighty of these are extant.¹⁶ His talent was revealed for the first time when the Virgin Mary appeared to him in his sleep on Christmas eve and ordered him, as Ezekiel had been commanded, to swallow a scroll. When he awoke, he opened his mouth and recited his famous Christmas hymn. In a *kontakion* on the Passion intended for Good Friday, we find a whole stanza based on the form of the *improperia*. Like a scarlet thread, the thematic word “pillar” *στολος*. passes through it. This thematic word regularly connects and emphasizes the contrast between what God did for the Jews and what the Jews did to Him. This is not a case of an organizing rhyme but rather of the rhetoric of a prominent thematic word, which appears in various places:

Μάστιγας φέρει ὁ λυτρωτής,	δέσμιος ἦν ὁ λύτης,
γυμνωθεὶς καὶ ἐκταθεὶς	ἐπὶ στύλου
ὁ ἐν στύλῳ πρὶν νεφέλης	Μωϋσεῖ καὶ Ἀαρὼν λαλῶν·
ὁ τῆς γῆς τοὺς στύλους	
στερεώσας, ὡς Δαυιδ	ἔφη, στύλῳ προσδέδεται·
ὁ δεῖξας τῷ λαῷ ὁδὸν εἰς ἔρημον	
—πύρινος γὰρ πρὸ αὐτῶν	ἐφαίνετο ὁ στύλος—στύλῳ [προσήφθη,

The Savior was in chains naked and stretched on the pillar
 He who in a pillar of smoke spoke to Moses and to Aaron
 He who established the pillars of the earth... / was tied to a pillar
 He... to whom the pillar of fire was revealed / was bound to a pillar¹⁷

Rhetorical structures regularly emphasizing the difference between the glorious past and the less glorious present have also been preserved in Hebrew poetry. Here the poets emphasize the difference between what happened in the days of Moses, when the Children of Israel left Egypt in joy, and what happened to them in the days of Jeremiah, when

¹⁶ See A. Or, “Romanos Melodus,” *Heliqon—Sidra antologit lešira ‘akšawwit* 18 (1996): 105–16 (Hebrew).

¹⁷ See P. Mass and C. A. Trypanis, eds., *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica* (Oxford, 1963), 154; J. Grosdidier de Matons, ed., *Romanos le Melode: Hymnes*, t. IV, (Paris, 1967) IV: 220.

they were exiled from the Land of Israel in grief and torment. The regularly appearing words at the beginnings of the lines of these two-lined structured stanzas are always “In the days of Moses” and “In the days of Jeremiah,” and the rhymes at the ends of the lines are heavier and concentrate the disappointment with repeated sounds. The use of antithesis is also typical of Jewish hymns written for the Sabbaths of Calamity before the Ninth of Ab, the day of the destruction of the Temple:

בִּימֵי מֹשֶׁה הִבְקַעוּ מִי תְּהוֹמוֹת
 וּבִימֵי יִרְמְיָהוּ הִבְקַעָה עִיר חוֹמוֹת...
 בִּימֵי מֹשֶׁה סוּבְלוּ עַל עֲנָנִים
 וּבִימֵי יִרְמְיָהוּ שָׁנְאֵיהֶם עָלוּ כְּעֲנָנִים
 בִּימֵי מֹשֶׁה עָלוּ עַל נְשָׁרִים
 וּבִימֵי יִרְמְיָהוּ שָׁנְאֵיהֶם עָלוּ כְּנְשָׁרִים

In the days of Moses, the waters of the abyss broke through
 And in the days of Jeremiah the walled city was broken through

In the days of Moses, they were borne on clouds
 And in the days of Jeremiah their enemies rose like clouds

In the days of Moses they ascended on eagles
 And in the days of Jeremiah their enemies ascended like eagles (Yannai II: 309–310)¹⁸

In his broad rhymes, the author of the lament uses, among other things, repeated thematic words, which carry the text along and contribute to its conceptual richness. Incidentally, this rhetorical move demonstrates how pairs of words were placed in the most prominent and significant place in the poetical line, the rhymed ending, in a manner that makes it easier to absorb the idea that is transmitted aurally.

Romanos left behind a great treasure of poetical, metrical sermons, which were performed musically in the church. Literary critics regard some of his works as masterpieces of world literature, and scholars of the church hymns believe that in Romanos’s hands the metrical sermon known as *kontakion* reached its peak. The *kontakion* is usually composed of eighteen to twenty-four strophes with the same metrical pattern, and they are introduced by a short strophe known as the

¹⁸ M. Rabinowitz, ed., *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai According to the Triennial Cycle of the Pentateuch and the Holidays* (Jerusalem, 1985–1987), 2 vols. (Hebrew).

prooimion. The *prooimion* is independent in meter compared to the other strophes, and it is not interwoven into any alphabetical chain. With respect to its prosodic freedom, it is certainly similar to the short introductory poems that lack any connection with an established benediction and are featured in the center (the fourth position) of the great compositional form known in Judaism as *kedushta*.

The *kedushta* is intended to be performed during morning prayers on holidays and Sabbaths. It is composed of at least eight parts, and the fourth poem stands out because of its open prosody. Like the *prooimion*, this poem is free from the restrictions of meter and alphabetical order. Its opening phrase is always, "אֱלֹהֵינוּ" (O God), which also recalls the *prooimion* in its style of address and use of the second person. The function of the *prooimion* was to present the central theme of the work and, finally, to reach to the refrain, which is hereafter revealed at the end of every stanza. The Hebrew introductory poem, in contrast to the *prooimion*, a predetermined theme composed of epithets for God ("Living and existing, awesome and exalted, You the Holy"), which also are repeated at least once more at the conclusion of the sermon poem that follows.¹⁹

Since it is an introductory poem, the *prooimion* is marked by sharp rhetorical formulations and dramatic contrasts and contradictions.²⁰ Thus, for example, the *kontakion* on the miraculous birth (2), performed on December twenty-sixth, begins with a typically paradoxical *prooimion*:

Ὁ πρὸ ἑωσφόρου ἐκ Πατρὸς ἀμήτωρ γεννηθεὶς
ἐπὶ γῆς ἀπάτωρ ἑσαρκώθη σήμερον ἐκ σοῦ·

He who before the Morning Star
From the father with no mother was born
Has been born today without father from thee
Mary, full of grace.²¹

¹⁹ E. Fleischer, "Studies in the Prosodic Character of Several Components of the Qedušta," *Hasifrut: Quarterly for the Study of Literature*, vol. III (1972): 571 n. 19 (Hebrew).

²⁰ Some of the refrains are identical in their formulations of the paradox. See H. Hinger, "Die Antithese: Zur Verbreitung einer Denkschablone in der byzantinischen Literatur," *Zbornik Madova Vizantološkog instituta*, 23 (1984): 25.

²¹ J. Grosdidier de Matons, ed., *Romanos le mélode—Hymnes* (Paris, 1965), II: 88–9.

Similarly, in the *prooimion* on the Annunciation (36), for March twenty-fifth, Romanos declares:

ἔγνωμεν, Κύριε, ἀφ' οὗ ἐτέχθης
καὶ υἱὸς ἄνομισθης γυναικὸς ἧς ἐποίησας·
ἦν μακαρίζοντες καθ' ἐκάστην βοῶμεν·
Χαῖρε, νύμφη ἀνύμφευτε.

We know that, O Lord, from the day You were born
And called the son of the woman whom Thou didst create
We proclaim her “blessed” as we pray each day:
Hail, Virgin wife.²²

“Hail, Virgin wife” then serves as a refrain at the end of each strophe. In the *kontakion* on the birth of the Virgin Mary from Anna, who was barren (35), Romanos writes in his *prooimion* for September eighth: “The barren woman gives birth to the mother of God—and the nurse of our life.” The popularity of the *akathistos* hymn, famous in the Eastern church since the sixth century, is evidenced by the fact that it is in continuous use to the present day. The *kontakion*, or the section that is a poetic sermon, was sung by a soloist, and the refrains, “Hail bride unwed,” were sung by a chorus.

The question of the Son, who was born, and who is not equal in status to the Father, preoccupied both Christians and heretics. In his *Viae Dux*, a guide for believers to protect themselves against various heresies and defend the truth of Christianity, Anastasius of Sinai tells about certain heretics who, when they hear about the birth of God, imagine marriage, fertilization and reproduction, and even carnal intimacy.²³ The subject arose in a Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath when the Torah portion beginning “If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child” (Lev. 12:2) was read. The poet Yannai wove the subject of birth, which is raised by the Torah portion, into his poem and connected it to the figure of God, to whom the hymn is addressed. Thus, he makes God responsible for everything that is born, to which He, as it were, also gives birth:

אֵל נָא
אָב בֶּל יִלְדֶּךָ וּבֶן לֹא הוֹלֵדֶךָ
וְכֹל יֵלֵד לְיָדֶךָ אֶתָּה מֵיֵלֵד

²² Ibid., 20–1.

²³ See K. Uthemann, ed., *Anastasioi Sinaitae, Viae Dux* (Brespols, 1981), 169–70.

O God,
 You are son to no father and You gave birth to no son
 And everything born by birth You deliver (Yannai I: 388)

We find the very same idea, worded similarly, in a liturgical piece for Yom Kippur.²⁴ The repeated word here is “עֶזֶר” (helpmate), taken from the Biblical phrase “עֶזֶר כַּנְגִדוֹ”:

עֶזֶר לֹא קִדְמָךְ / לְעֶזֶר לֹא נַחְבְּרָתְךָ // וְהֵעֵמְדָתְךָ בְּעֶזְרִי / תִּלְוִדוֹת לְךָ עֵינִיר

You had no initial helpmate / You joined no helpmate // And You established with Your *potentia* / Progeny to be a helpmate.

A poet comparing God to a woman giving birth immediately had to modify the comparison and insist that God has neither father nor son.

These hymns beginning with “אֵל נָא” (O God) regularly end with an identical paradoxical formula that relates to the essence of the divinity in the context of the *kedushta*: “Living and existing, awesome and elevated, You the Holy”—a living being that exists eternally, elevated and distant but nevertheless feared, and above all holy. This refrain serves as part of the early passage, “אֵל נָא לְעוֹלָם תִּוְעָרֵץ” (Please, Lord, eternally revered), which regularly accompanies the poetical sermon that follows the introductory hymn. This was perhaps its original function—to supply the repeated refrain for the poetical sermon following in a manner similar to that which we find in the *kontakion*.

With respect to structure, one can point out parallel developments in the synagogue and the church. This was of course an anathema to the Church Fathers. John Chrysostom, the famous preacher from Antioch, even complained at the end of the fourth century about Christians who were attracted to liturgical performances in the synagogue. The marvelous work of Romanos the Melode, which was created, as it were, *ex nihilo*, certainly reveals a process that quickly reached maturity in the church, but it was apparently rather well known in the East. At the beginning of the introductory poem rhetorical questions appear: “Who is like You? Who is similar to You?” Similar verses were still preserved in the regular prayers of the *yotser* for the Sabbath. However, entirely surprisingly, those questions become real ones, and a comparison between upper and lower realms follows. Thus, for example,

²⁴ J. Elbogen, *Studien zur Geschichte des jüdischen Gottesdienstes* (Berlin, 1907), 185.

on the Sabbath when the Torah portion beginning “Ye shall be Holy” (Lev. 19:1), we find at the beginning of the introductory poem:

מִי כְמוֹךָ / וּמִי כְעַמֶּךָ // וּמִי דוּמָה לְךָ? / וְהֵם דּוּמִים לְךָ

Who is like You / and who is like Your people // and who is similar to You / and they are similar to You

The response that follows, as one might expect is: “נְאֻה מְקֹדְשִׁים” (Yannai I: 444 and cf. I: 319) “קְדוּשָׁה לְקְדוֹשׁ”

“Fitting from the holy ones is holiness to the Holy One”

The poet is certain, on the one hand, that there is nothing like God, but at the same time he hastens to state that Israel is similar to Him. Needless to say, the danger of anthropomorphism threatens these comparisons, especially in wedding poems. This way of starting by exclusion is typical of the *prooimion* by Romanos, too, as we have seen: “None is merciful like Thee.”

Before moving on to the betrothal and marriage poems, let us take up one associated with the portion “Gather seventy elders for me” (Num. 11:16). The poet simply follows in the footsteps of the description of the “Ancient of Days” in Daniel (7:9) here, and the result is rather similar in its ideas to what we find in the mystical literature of the “שיעור קומה” (the measure of the body) type:

אֵל נָא
לְזַקְנִים חֲלֻקָתָ רֹב כְּבוֹד / כִּי לְךָ דִּימִיתָם בְּהִדָּר כְּבוֹד
שְׂעַר רֵאשִׁם מְלִבִּין וְנָקִי / כְּמוֹ שְׂעַר רֵאשְׁךָ מְלוּבָן בְּצָמֵר נָקִי

O God,

You accorded to the elders great honor / Because you made them like You in glory and honor

The hair of their head, white and clean / like the hair of Your head as white as wool clean (Yannai II: 44).

A ninth-century poet named Amitai birabi Shefatya lived in a Palestinian Jewish community in Apulia, in southern Italy. Among other works, he wrote poems for the marriage of his sister Casia. In his introductory poem, he addresses God with a rather detailed comparison between the creatures of heaven and those on earth, between angels and human beings, and needless to say, human beings come out best. Only through them and by them can the Holy One be sanctified:

כִּי בְרִיּוֹת מֵעַל מְאֹשׁ וּמִמִּים חֲצִבָּתָ / וְתַאֲוֹת חֲמוּד לָהֶם לֹא נִתְּתָ
וּפְרִיָהּ וְרִבְיָהּ בְּתוֹכָם לֹא הוֹדַעְתָּ / וְחַתָּנִים וְכֹלֹת בִּינֵיהֶם לֹא הִתְנַתָּ

וּבְרִיּוֹת תְּבַל מִחֹמֶר הַגְּלִמָּת / וּבָהֶם נִשְׁמַת רוּחַ נִפְתָּח
 וְלִפְרוֹת וְלִרְבוֹת אוֹתָם בְּרִכַּת / וְאַרְחָם וְרַבְעָם זֵרִית
 כִּי לֹא לָתֵהוּ תְּבַל הַרְקֵעַת / אֲבָל לְשִׁבַת אוֹתָהּ יִצְרָת
 וּמָהֶם וְהֵם נִתְפָּאֲרַת / וְנִכְבְּדַת וְנִקְדְּשַׁת וְנִתְרוֹמַמַת
 חַי וְקַיִם נוֹרָא מְרוֹם וְקָדוֹשׁ

For creatures of heaven from fire and water You carved out / and lust
 You gave them not
 And procreation and propagation You never established among them /
 and grooms and brides among them You did not marry
 And creatures of the world You formed of clay / and in them you
 breathed a soul
 And with being fruitful and multiplying You blessed them / and their
 seed and couch You disposed
 For You did not spread the world out for chaos / but to settle it You
 created it
 And from them and by them You were glorified / and You were honored
 and sanctified and exalted
 Living and existing, awesome and elevated, You the Holy (*Megilat
 Ahima'as*, 88–89)²⁵

According to Amitai, it is human beings, who are combined of matter
 and spirit, whose matching is a match: they do the will of the Creator
 of the universe, which is not true of those whose match is from fire
 and water.

El'azar birabi Kalir, or Kilir, or, if you will, Kiril (Cyril), who lived
 several centuries before Amitai, had a strong messianic orientation.
 In his work for a groom, he sees Israel in the figure of the bride and
 God as her groom, to whom he speaks in nuptial style, begging Him to
 open the “locked garden” (Song of Songs 4:12), and to make the bridal
 canopy into a Temple:

וְתִפְתַּח נְעִילַת גֶּן הַנְּעוּלָה /... וְתִקְרָא חֲפָתָהּ בֵּית הַתְּפִילָה
 בְּהַגְלוֹתֶךָ נוֹרָא עֲלִילָה / לְשִׁמְחָהּ בְּשִׁמְחַת חֲתָן וְכִלָּה
 חַי וְקַיִם נוֹרָא וּמְרוֹם וְקָדוֹשׁ

Open the locking of the locked garden
 ... and announce her bridal canopy the house of prayer
 in Your revelation awesome in deed
 to make her happy with the joy of groom and bride
 Living and existing, awesome, elevated, You the Holy.²⁶

²⁵ B. Klar, ed., *Megilat Ahima'as*, (Jerusalem, 1954) (Hebrew).

²⁶ E. Fleischer, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in the Middle Ages* (Jerusalem, 1975), 158 (Hebrew).

The transition from the personal and private to the national direction attested in the poetry of Kilir, who is famous for his violent national laments for the Ninth of Ab, is probably no coincidence.

In a work for the Sabbath when the portion “thou shalt surely tithe” (Deut. 14:22) was read, Yannai still speaks about Israel, his congregation, with touching simplicity: “We did not tithe.” He goes on to evoke a liminal situation: “דְּמִינוּ לְאֹנִיָּה דְּמוּמָה לֹא בָּאָה וְלֹא שָׁבָה” (“We were like a silenced ship, neither coming nor going,” Yannai II: 291). Pinḥas Hacoheh, who lived in the eighth century, certainly knew the work of Yannai, and he even expanded on the image. He transformed Israel into a being neither living nor dead:

דְּמִינוּ לְאֹנִיָּה בְּלֵב יָם מְעוּבָבָה / לֹא בָּאָה וְלֹא שָׁבָה
דְּמִינוּ לְחֹזְלָה / לֹא מָת וְלֹא חָיָה / מְקוּנָה לְדֵי מִימֵית וּמְחִיָּה.

We were like a ship detained in the heart of the sea
neither coming nor going
we were like a sick person,
neither dying nor living
hoping for You, who puts to death and brings to life. (Pinhas 312)²⁷

However, the tone of the *piyyut* by Pinḥas is entirely different from that of Yannai. His words already convey protest against the miserable state of the nation, and he opens his introductory poem with a rhetorical question: “מָמָה נְעִשֵׁר וּמָמָה נְתָרוּם / מָמָה נְכַבֵּד וּמָמָה נִתֵּן // מָמָה לְנִכְרִים יְגִיעֵינוּ / אֲרֻצָּנוּ לֹא לָנוּ / וְשָׁלְנוּ לֹא לָנוּ // לְזָרִים כּוֹחֵינוּ / לְנִכְרִים יְגִיעֵינוּ” (“With what will we tithe and with what will we contribute / with what will we honor and from what will we give // our land is not ours / and what is ours is not ours // our achievement is to foreigners / our work for strangers,” Ibid.). Finally he knows that a real solution to the problem is only in the hands of the “Living and existing, awesome and elevated, and Holy.”

A *payyetan* named Yehuda, who still wrote works based on the ancient Palestinian triennial cycle, developed the theology of the anomaly of exile into a true system. He apparently lived and was active in a Byzantine community more remote from Jerusalem than Pinḥas. His introductory poem begins regularly with the interrogation: “until when?” Thus, for example, in a work for the reading of “When you

²⁷ Š. Elizur, ed., *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Pinḥas ha-Kohen* (Jerusalem, 2004) (Hebrew).

come to the Land" (Deut. 26:1), which deals with the commandment to offer first fruits in the Temple, the poet cries out in protest because there is no possibility of observing that commandment, and he is not the one to blame for that. In phrases typical of his poetics, he asks and also answers in his introductory poem: "עַד מָתִי תִהְיֶה אֲרֻצְנוּ שְׁמָמָה" / "וּבְטָלוּ בִיבוּרֵי פִירוֹתֶיהָ? עַד תִּחְיֶה יְשִׁינֵי תַרְדְּמָה" ("Until when will our land be barren / ...and our first fruits be annulled? Until You arouse the sleepers," Yehuda, 87). In the place where that poet lived, it was apparently forbidden for the Jews to gather together and accept the yoke of the kingdom of heaven by reciting, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." This prohibition was decreed by the Emperor Leo III, the Syrian, in the first half of the eighth century.²⁸ This is perhaps the reason for the words that the poet Yehuda wrote in an introductory poem for the Sabbath when the portion "Ye stand this day in front of Your God" (Deut. 29:9) is read. He speaks out against the gentiles: "עַד מָתִי עִמָּד מְפוֹזְרִים כּוֹלֵם / בְּאַרְבַּע כְּנָפוֹת הָאָרֶץ עֲלֵיהֶם" / "עַד מָתִי עִמָּד מְפוֹזְרִים כּוֹלֵם / וְעִיבּוֹנֵי לְדוֹרְשֶׁךָ וְיִיחַדְתִּיךָ מְלֶךְ עוֹלָם" ("Until when will Your nation all be scattered / in the four corners of the earth on them is their yoke / and they [the gentiles] prevent me from seeking You, and I proclaimed Your unity, king of the Universe?" Yehuda, 89).

In the days of Rabbi Yehudai Gaon (d. 763), people knew of the religious oppression that had struck the Jewish communities of Byzantium. A student of his student, Pirkoy ben Baboy, tells about the customs of the Jews of Palestine, who were forced to move the recitation of "Holy, holy, holy" and "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One," from their traditional place in the morning prayer service to the Musaf prayers, because of the decrees.²⁹ This could be the meaning of the expression "וְעִיבּוֹנֵי... וְיִיחַדְתִּיךָ" ("and they prevented me... and I proclaimed Your unity"). Perhaps this matter left its mark both on the special structure of the *kedushta* as formulated by Yehuda the *Payyetan* as well.

The poems of Yehuda regularly lack the most essential part of the *kedushta*, the ecstatic introduction, the *siluq*, which prepares, with its abundant verbs and synonyms, the triple declaration, which signifies the climax of excitement and the removal of the words from the

²⁸ A. Sharf, "The Jews, the Montanists and the Emperor Leo III," in idem, *Jews and other Minorities in Byzantium* (Jerusalem, 1995), 109–18.

²⁹ L. Ginzburg, ed., *Ginzei Schechter II (Genizah Studies in Memory of Doctor S. Schechter, Geonic and Early Karaite Halakhah)* (New York, 1929), II: 552–9.

mouth: “Holy, holy, holy.” The *siluq* certainly attracted full attention with its tempestuous rhythms, and it revealed in the clearest manner the moment of reciting the *kedusha*, even to someone for whom Jewish prayer was not entirely understandable. When the *kedusha* was delayed to *musaf* (the additional Sabbath prayer) the *siluq* of the *kedushta*, which was still recited during *šaharit*, the morning prayer, also lost its function. Perhaps this is why Yehuda, in his *piyyutim*, regularly left out this important component of the *kedushta*.³⁰ The later developments in the introductory poems are expressed in the reinforcement of the place of the individual in public prayer as well.

Yošiyahu, the young and beloved son of a judge from Gaza, Rabbi Yešu‘a Ben Natan, who died, is central in an introductory poem of a *kedushta* written by his father and copied by his own hand in the spring of 1026. The subject of the father’s wonderment and enthusiasm in this opening poem of the only *kedushta* by him that has come down to us, is the son who was only six years old when he died:

יְלֵד לְ[א הֵן] לְאָדָם כְּמוֹהוּ
 רֵךְ בְּשָׁנִים וְזָקֵן בְּמִדְעָהוּ
 אֵיךְ פִּתְאוֹם הִלָּךְ וְאֵיךְ
 אֵיךְ אָנַחֵם... עַד יִנְחַמְנִי
 מְרוֹם נוֹרָא וְקָדוֹשׁ

No one had a son like him
 Tender in years and old in his knowing
 How did he go so suddenly and be no more
 How will I be consoled...until He consoles me
 Elevated, awesome, and Holy³¹

In the later sermon poem the words “How will I be consoled...until He consoles me” serve as a repeated refrain,³² after every other pair

³⁰ The typical traits of Yehuda’s style do not necessarily indicate his time. They could well point to the southern Italian Byzantine school, to which he might have belonged. See E. Fleischer, “‘Hedweta,’ *Italia* 13–15 (2001): 23–5 (Hebrew); idem, Hedweta birabi Abraham: The First of the *Payyetanim* of Italy?” *Italia* 2 (1981): 7–26 (Hebrew).

³¹ M. Zulai, “The Elegy of Yešu‘a the Member birabi Natan on the Death of his Son Yošiyahu,” *Yedi‘ot hamakon leheqer hašira ha‘Ivrit* 3 (1937): 178 (Hebrew), and also E. Fleischer, “Remarks on Medieval Hebrew Poetry,” in *Literary Studies in Honor of Shimon Halkin*, ed. E. Fleischer (Jerusalem, 1973), 186 (Hebrew).

³² Expressions using “עד” (‘ad—until) with accompanying second-person future verb forms are often used to conclude opening poems. We have seen above in the *piyyutim* of Yehuda: “עד תחיה” (“Until you arouse”); and it is common in the *piyyutim*

of rhymes. Perhaps in particular because of the extremely personal character of this text, the father, who apparently recited it, wrote not only the body of the text but also the refrains, which might have been recited by the audience.

Parallel developments of formulas of declarations of faith connect the believers in their houses of worship to their God through the thematics of the liturgical reading of scripture. Yannai and Romanos were both active during the sixth century. Allegorical adaptations associated with a strong national attitude characterize the poetry of El'azar birabi Kilir. A new nationalistic sensitivity imbues, perhaps, the *piyyutim* of Yehuda, and only Amitai birabi Šefatya, in the ninth century, returns to imaginary comparisons, but this time only with the world of angels. The expression of the judge, Rabbi Yešu'a birabi Natan belongs to a personal movement of lyric poetry. In any event, he lived beyond the borders of Byzantium and only the ancient tradition of the genre still throbs in his heart and in his work.

of Yannai "עד תלבין" ("until you make white," I, 434); "עד תבלע" ("until you swallow," II, 23), "עד שתחפוץ" ("until you desire," II, 123).

STYLE AS A CHRONOLOGICAL INDICATOR: ON THE RELATIVE DATING OF THE GOLAN SYNAGOGUES

Roni Amir

The following article* examines the stylistic development of synagogue architectural decoration in the central Golan in the Late Roman and Byzantine periods.¹ Remains of twenty-five synagogues were uncovered in the region, of which the following six were excavated: 'En Nashut, Qasrin, Kanaf, Dabiyye,² and recently the two southernmost of the group, Deir 'Aziz and Umm el-Qanatir.³ Many decorative

* I am grateful to my teachers Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin and Prof. Gideon Foerster, who advised me during my M.A. research, which dealt with the artistic and stylistic development of basalt reliefs and sculpture of the Golan in the Roman and Byzantine periods. This article is based on the first part of my thesis. It was prepared during my tenure at the *Scholion—Interdisciplinary Research Center in Jewish Studies* at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Special thanks go to Rina Talgam for her enlightening remarks, and to Tania Coen-Uzzielli, Sarit Shalev-Eini, and Orit Peleg. For an illustrated glossary of the architecture and motifs of the Galilean synagogues, see R. Jacoby and R. Talgam, *Architectural Glossary, Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art, Ancient Jewish Synagogues* (Jerusalem, 1988). This article was published in Hebrew see: A. Roni, "Style as a Means of Periodization: The Relative Chronology of Synagogues in the Golan" *Cathedra* 124 (2007): 29-50.

¹ There is a dispute among scholars regarding the chronology and geographical dispersion of the Jewish settlement in the Golan. Zvi U. Ma'oz claims that the original core of the settlement was in the central Golan (Gaulanitis). In his view, the Jews abandoned the region after the First Jewish Revolt, with synagogue construction commencing only in the fifth century. See Z. Ma'oz, *The Architecture and Art of Ancient Synagogues in the Golan* (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993), 8 (Hebrew). Chaim Ben-David adopts a similar approach, though he holds that the synagogues were first erected in the fourth century; see C. Ben-David, *Settlement in "Lower Golan" in Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods* (Ph.D. dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, 1999) 247, 303 (Hebrew). See also M. Hartal, *The Material Culture of Northern Golan in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods* (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003), 297 (Hebrew). An alternative view, held by Dan Urman, sees the Jewish settlement as having extended throughout the Golan (including the entire regions of Gaulanitis and Hippos/Sussita) and not ceasing with the destruction of the Second Temple. See D. Urman and P. Flesher, eds., *Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery*, II (Leiden, 1995), 378-85, 607-17. In my opinion, the artistic finds suggest that after the Second Temple period, the Jaraba synagogue is the earliest in the Golan. Ma'oz, *Architecture and Art*, 9.

² Ma'oz, *Architecture and Art*, 9.

³ On the Deir 'Aziz synagogue, see C. Ben-David, "The Synagogue at Deir 'Aziz in the Golan—A Summary of Four Excavation Seasons," in *New Studies on the*

architectural fragments have been discovered at both the excavated and unexcavated synagogue sites. Most of the fragments are housed today in the archaeological museum at Qasrin, though some remain on site. Others are recognizable as spolia in buildings still standing in the Golan, or are scattered among various locations.⁴ Except for a few historical and epigraphical sources,⁵ the architecture and ornament of the synagogues are a primary source of evidence of the history of the entire region.

There are four parts to this study. The first is a preface, in which I present the stylistic-analysis method I have employed in my research. At the root of this methodology lies the assumption that tracing the development of the decorative style of buildings can be instructive on the periods in which those buildings were constructed. Based on this claim, I put forth in the second part of the study a relative chronology for dating the decorative architectural fragments from the Golan synagogues, as emerges from stylistic analysis. My chronology for the synagogues does not fully agree with that proposed by Zvi Uri Ma'oz.⁶ He divided the Golan synagogues into three groups or "clusters": the Khorazim—'En Nashut cluster, dated to the fifth century and including the synagogues of Khorazim, 'En Nashut, ed-Dikkeh, Khawkha, and 'Ahmadiyye; and two groups of the sixth century: the Khanaf cluster, consisting of the Khanaf, Deir 'Aziz, and et-Tayibe synagogues; and the Qasrin cluster, consisting of the 'Asaliyye, Qusibiyye, and Yahudiyye synagogues. According to Ma'oz's paradigm, there are no Golan synagogues of the fourth century.

Stylistic analysis can be used to help date the Galilean synagogues to the same degree that it can be employed for the Golan. The motifs

Synagogue and Its World: Proceedings of the 24th Annual Conference of the Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology, Bar-Ilan University, ed. Uzi Leibner (Ramat Gan, 2004), 4 (Hebrew); Y. Drei, C. Ben-David and I. Gonen, "The Umm el-Qanatir Synagogue: The 5th through the 21st Centuries," in *ibid.*, 5 (Hebrew); C. Ben David, I. Gonen and Y. Drei, "Umm el-Qanatir—The First Excavation Season," *Qadmoniot* 132 (2006): 110–120 (Hebrew). See also <http://www.yeshuat.com>, "Current Project." October 5, 2010.

⁴ For example, the decorative fragments from the ed-Dikkeh synagogue can be found alongside the dining hall of Kibbutz 'En Gev.

⁵ J. Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic: The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues* (Jerusalem, 1978) (Hebrew). See also R. Gregg, *Jews, Pagans, and Christians in the Golan Heights: Greek and Other Inscriptions of the Roman and Byzantine Eras*, *South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism* 140 (Atlanta, 1996).

⁶ Z. Ma'oz, "Golan Synagogues" *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 2 (1993): 538–44.

and style of synagogue architectural ornament in the Golan derived from the decorative programs of the Galilean synagogues, allowing one to trace a single artistic or stylistic sequence between the two. This developmental sequence is addressed in the second half of the article. In the third part, I describe the decorative style of the Capernaum synagogue, while relating to its artistic link to the Khorazim synagogue. In the fourth section, which serves as a summary, I illustrate the stylistic development of Galilean and Golan synagogues by analyzing individual motifs (lions and eagles) discovered at various synagogues in the two regions.

I. THE STYLISTIC ANALYSIS METHOD

Most scholars of synagogue art have focused on motifs—their provenance and diffusion—while dealing with style in only a cursory manner.⁷ Some have even rejected the possibility of arriving at a relative chronology for Golan synagogues on the basis of style:

Since the style and the execution of these works belongs to a long tradition in the era, dating is difficult, nor is it possible to establish a relative stylistic chronology [...] the presence of different artistic styles in the same building makes dating by style impossible.⁸

Another approach, which holds that artistic style can be used as a historical tool, was well expressed by Meir Shapiro in an article written in 1953. He writes:

To the art historian, style is the primary subject of inquiry. He will use style as a gauge to establish the time and place of works and to note affinities between schools. Yet, above all, style betrays quality and expression, reflections of the personality of the artist and the overall image of the group. Style is a means of expression within society.⁹

⁷ The study of motifs is of utmost importance, particularly when considering the entire decorative program of a structure. However, it should be noted that motifs can rather easily move over space and time, and as such are poor chronological indicators. In stylistic analysis, the grouping and regrouping of various motifs over time is highly significant.

⁸ R. Hachlili, "Late Antique Jewish Art from the Golan," in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research*, ed. J. Humphrey (Ann Arbor, 1995), 189.

⁹ M. Shapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist and Society-Selected Papers*, (New York, 1994), 51–102.

According to this approach, the art historian must identify and define a style or styles characteristic of an era and point to a sequence of stylistic development in a particular region over time.

The goal of the style method is to ascertain stylistic development in a specific geographical area in order to date individual items, unexcavated structures, or structures whose dating is controversial. It relies on known styles in use at dated sites (i.e., where the archaeological data suits artistic style). The style of any period is based not on a single item but on an entire assemblage: capitals, decorative reliefs, and the entablature components, such as the architrave, frieze, cornice, conch, Syrian gable, and others.

Style is defined by certain established and definable criteria: technique, composition, and the fashioning of figures and details. As a rule, one can use the general style of a well-dated site to deduce the style and date of a single architectural fragment; however, one cannot define the style of an era on the basis of a single fragment, nor should one use a single fragment to reach conclusions or establish the style of a complete assemblage. It should be kept in mind when performing stylistic analysis that the architectural decoration was not necessarily homogenous, and decorative assemblages might contain elements predating or postdating the primary assemblage. This could arise if items from an earlier structure were used secondarily in the building in question, or if the building was renovated. Furthermore, any stylistic inquiry should be aware of the potential presence of highly skilled craftsmen alongside inferior artisans. There can also be cases of stylistic deficiency, in which a piece's stylistic content is too minimal for proper analysis. In sum, the similarities and differences among fragments of a given assemblage can be addressed on several levels: Did the same artist sculpt all of the fragments? Were they produced in the same workshop? Are they part of the same prototypical style or common regional style?

A few books and articles dealing with the development of regional artistic styles have recently been published. Jacquelyn Dentzer-Feydy has examined the stylistic development in southern Syria (Hauran, Leja, and Jabal ad-Duruz),¹⁰ and Christine Strube has researched the

¹⁰ J. Dentzer-Feydy, "Décor architectural et développement du hauran dans l'antiquité (du I s. av au VII s. de notre ère)," in *Hauran, I: Recherches Archéologiques sur la Syrie du sud à l'Époque Hellénistique et Romaine*, ed. J.-M. Dentzer (Paris, 1985-1986), 261-301.

style of north Syrian churches.¹¹ These studies show that in neighboring regions such as northern and southern Syria there were different periods of growth and decline. The floruit in southern Syria, as reflected in architecture and artistic ornament, is from the second and third centuries (the provincial era), followed by a decline; while in northern Syria, the fourth century bore witness to architectural and artistic growth, which peaked in the fifth and sixth centuries.

II. STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE GOLAN

The central Golan, referred to by Josephus as Lower Gaulanitis, lies between Hippos to the south and Paneas to the north. As mentioned, it includes some twenty-five synagogues, though I would propose adding the synagogue at Khorazim to the group. Though Khorazim is technically in the Galilee, its synagogue is built of basalt and is an architectural link between the Galilean and Golan synagogues. In this area just north of the Sea of Galilee, four synagogues have been dated on archaeological grounds: the Khorazim synagogue to the first half of the fourth century, the 'En Nashut synagogue to the mid-fifth century, and the Qasrin and Kanaf synagogues to the first half of the sixth century. I use these synagogues as chronological anchors in establishing the stylistic development in the area north of the Sea of Galilee and in the Golan.

A. Khorazim and Fourth-Century Synagogues

The Khorazim synagogue (in its first phase) is dated to the first half of the fourth century, primarily based on a coin hoard retrieved in Building E, just to the north of the synagogue, but also on sealed loci under the synagogue floor.¹² The dating is supported by the column capitals discovered at the site (Fig. 1). The diagonal Ionic capitals from Khorazim are remarkably similar to Ionic capitals from various structures in southern Syria (in the regions of Hauran, Leja, and Jabal ad-Duruz),

¹¹ C. Strube, *Baudekoration im nordsyrischen Kalksteinmassiv, I: Kapille-, Tür- und Gesimsformen der Kirchen des 4. and 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Mainz am Rhein, 1993); *ibid.*, II: *Das 6 und frühe 7. Jahrhundert* (Mainz am Rhein, 2002), 226–36.

¹² Ze'ev Yeivin dated it to the beginning of the fourth century, Ariel to the first half of the fourth century. See Z. Yeivin, *The Synagogue at Korazim, the 1962–1964, 1980–1987 Excavations* (IAA Reports 10; Jerusalem), 106 (Hebrew); D. Ariel, "Coins from the Korazim Synagogue," in *ibid.*, 103–4.



Fig. 1: Diagonal Ionic capital, Khorazim synagogue.

which are dated to the second half of the third and beginning of the fourth century (Fig. 2).¹³ The evidence thus confirms a date in the first half of the fourth century for the Khorazim synagogue.

The distinctiveness of the synagogue lies in its unexpected and novel motif groupings.¹⁴ The originality of its sculptors is best expressed in the friezes (Figs. 3–6, 10). Alongside friezes with traditional acanthus

¹³ On the development of the Ionic capital in the region, see J. Dentzer-Feydy, "Les Chapiteux ioniques de Syrie méridionale," *Syria* 67 (1990): 171–5. The Khorazim capitals suit Dentzer-Feydy's Group 6, whose capitals have been discovered at the following monuments: The Philippeion at Shahbâ (Philippopolis), dated to 245–249 C.E.; the tomb at Rimet al-Lohf; the temple at Breikeh; the "tomb-mosque" at Shaqqâ; and the basilica at Shaqqâ. They are diagonal Ionic capitals. The echinus either has a single egg at its center or three oval eggs, enveloped in a circle and flanked by darts on each side. Three or four palmettos are carved onto the outer two eggs. The volutes are diagonal, their outer sides covered by an elongated acanthus leaf which reaches the column shaft. The center of the volute is situated at a third of the height of the echinus. The volutes are small, high, and compact, with two to three spirals.

¹⁴ Most of the decorative motifs at Khorazim appear on the Galilean synagogues: the acanthus scrolls on the frieze and the formal elements on the cornice at Capernaum; and the vine scrolls, rope band, flutes, meander, lions, eagles, and menorah in various combinations in the synagogues at Bar'am, Nabratein, Gush Halav, 'Ammudim, and Capernaum. It seems very significant that the open garland, which was common in the Roman period and appears at the Gush Halav and Capernaum synagogues, was absent at Khorazim and the Golan synagogues.



Fig. 2: Diagonal Ionic capital, southern Syria.

scrolls are others with vine scrolls¹⁵ or variegated formal motifs such as stylized floral designs or wreaths. The common wreaths adorning Galilean synagogue lintels are also present on the Khorazim friezes. Another innovation of the Khorazim artists is their widespread use of human figures on the frieze, an expression of the zeitgeist of their age (see Figs. 5, 10).

The Khorazim synagogue's repertoire of motifs is also characterized by the occurrence of the same motif in multiple forms. The wreath tied in a knot of Hercules, for example, is alternatively made of olive branches, a rope band, or laurel leaves (Fig. 3). The acanthus scrolls also have three variations. The leaves of one group are long and slender with rounded tips; they do not touch. Their circular arrangement confers a dynamic, whirling sense to the scroll (Fig. 4). A second group has broad leaves with sharpened tips, densely arranged though occasionally not touching; the motif inhabiting the scroll fills the entire central space, leaving nothing of a background. There is a plastic quality to

¹⁵ The grape harvest scene on the Khorazim frieze also appears on a number of lintels in the Hauran Roman temples or Roman buildings, all dated to the second century, as at Qanawat. See J. Dentzer-Feydy, "Les Linteaux à figures divines en Syrie méridionale," *Revue Archéologique* 87 (1992): 78, no. 18. This is further evidence of the influence of southern Syrian art on the artists working at Khorazim; see n. 13 above.



Fig. 3: Frieze, Khorazim synagogue.

the leaves and central element (Fig. 5). A third group has saw-tooth acanthus leaves, most of which are joined; the central motif does not take up the entire space within the scroll, leaving a background. The tips of the leaves are oriented, somewhat statically, to the center of the scroll (Fig. 6). Yet despite the variation on these three motif forms, the scrolls are fashioned in a similar style.

At first glance there appears to be a degree of inconsistency in the sculpting style of the Khorazim architectural fragments, with two main stylistic groups apparent. One conveys a sense of depth and plasticity, as expressed in one of the conches (Fig. 7). The other is stiffer, more severe, as represented by one of the Syrian gables (Fig. 8). However, these two divergent “styles”—seemingly reflections of different sculpting methods—can even appear on the same carved stone (Fig. 9). On the double column, for example, the zig-zag pattern and rope band are notably plastic in style, recalling the conch of the first aforementioned group, while the capital is rigid in execution, similar to the Syrian gable of the second. The architectural decoration of the Khorazim synagogue indeed appears to have been carried out by a number of craftsmen, though one should not attribute the architectural fragments to various workshops functioning at different time periods, as Natalie May has attempted to claim;¹⁶ variations in the carving of the

¹⁶ According to May, there are two workshops reflected in the Khorazim synagogue. The earlier workshop postdates the construction of the Capernaum synagogue in the second half of the third century; the later dates to the fifth century. May made no distinction between differences in style and differences in craftsmen. See N. May and I. Stark, “Reconstruction of the Architectural Décor of the Major Synagogue at Korazim,” *Atiqot* 43 (2002): 246–8.



Fig. 4: Friezes, Khorazim synagogue.



Fig. 5: Frieze, Khorazim synagogue.



Fig. 6: Frieze, Khorazim synagogue.

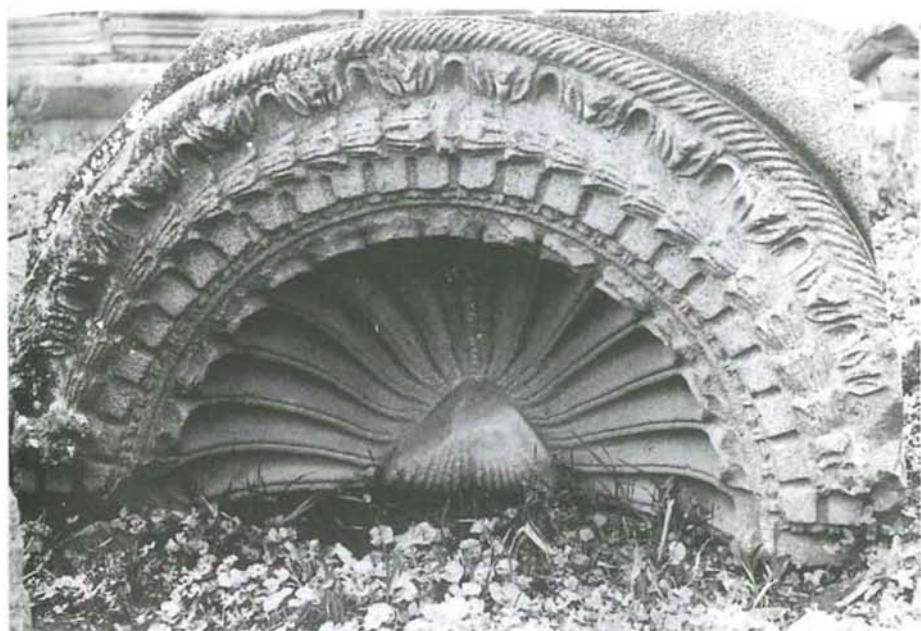


Fig. 7: Conch, Khorazim synagogue.



Fig. 8: Syrian gable, Khorazim synagogue.

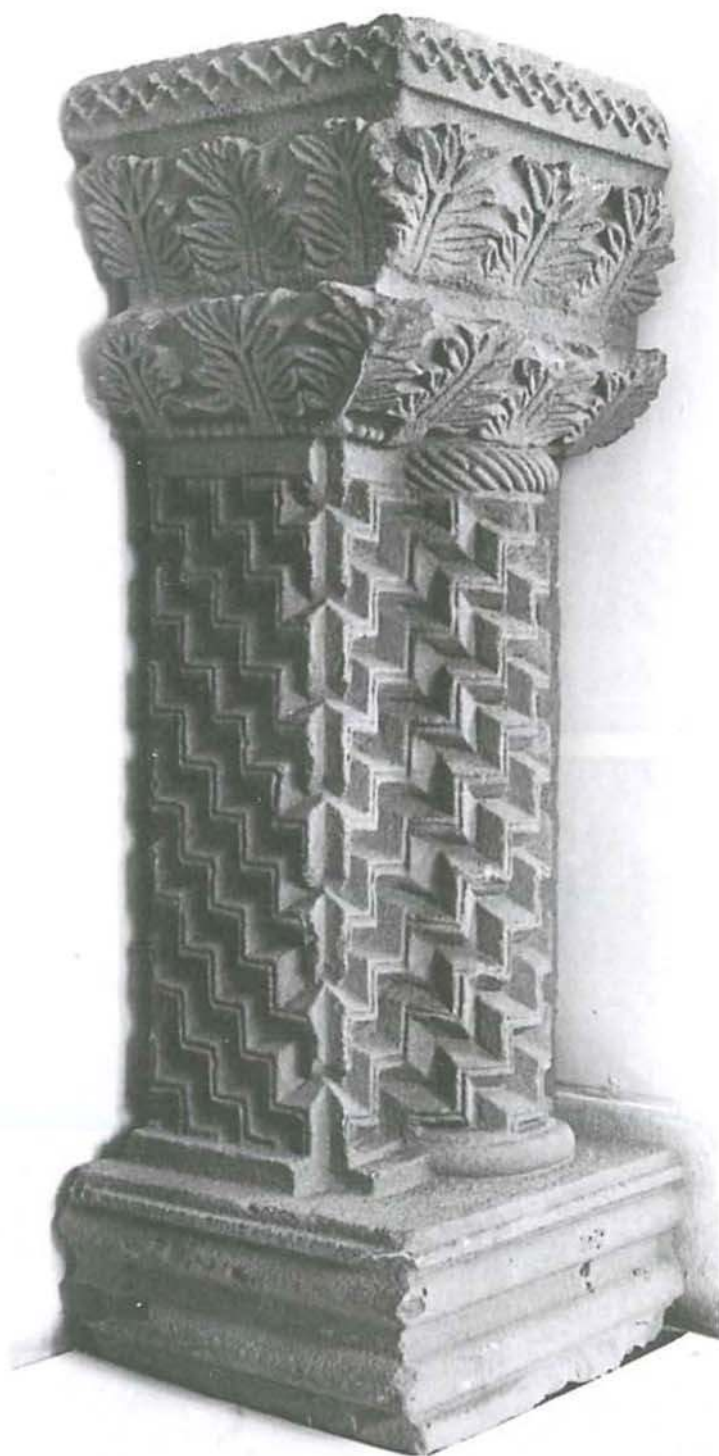


Fig. 9: Double column, Khorazim synagogue.

stone stem from the fact that different craftsmen worked simultaneously at the site. One can discern fragments sculpted by a skilled hand, such as frieze 5 (Fig. 5), from those where inexperienced artisans were involved, such as another frieze (Fig. 10). On that fragment, an experienced sculptor appears to have carved the rotund knot of Hercules and the wreath on the protruding part of the frieze; though such a skilled hand could not have executed the right medallion, which is significantly smaller than the left and flawed in its composition and detailing (Fig. 10).

In terms of composition, one discerns a similar approach in all of the synagogue's decorative fragments. Motifs are very densely arranged, in an expression of *horror vacui*, and there is a clear tendency towards continuous or "carpet" designs.

The originality of the Khorazim artists lies in their willingness to freely decorate using a host of motifs, to group motifs in novel combinations, and to create in every architectural fragment a "formula" that never recurs. The notable diversity in motif choice and execution, as well as the compositional values of the decorative program, reflect a previously unrecognized aesthetic taste. The sense of harmony that arose from both uniformity in technique and conservatism in motif grouping, as was common in the Late Roman period, is replaced here by new conceptual rhythms. The emphasis at Khorazim is now on the *absence* of uniformity, on eclecticism or diversity, in style and motif choice. It is a trait that distances the decorative program from the artistic values of the Late Roman period; this new mode of expression, combined with its orientation toward the past (as I show below),



Fig. 10: Frieze, Khorazim synagogue.

suit the aesthetic values of the early Byzantine period. The synagogue should be ascribed to the first half of the fourth century not only on the basis of the archaeological dating but also the diagonal Ionic capitals and the style of its decoration.

Similar traits, whether in terms of motif or sculpting technique, are found at a number of synagogues on either side of the Jordan River, such as ed-Dikkeh, el-Huseiniyye, er-Rafid, Khawkha, and the more distant Ghadriyye.¹⁷ These synagogues reflect a shared regional style, having all once born a rich display of carved architectural ornament using the full range of motifs.¹⁸ The similarity between the ed-Dikkeh and Khorazim synagogues is evident in various pieces: the diagonal Ionic capitals, the Corinthian capitals,¹⁹ the scrolled friezes (Fig. 11), color, and the sculpting style of various elements. Likewise there is a similarity in the design of the Syrian gables from ed-Dikkeh, er-Rafid, and Ghadriyye and in the cornices from ed-Dikkeh and el-Huseiniyye.

Given their stylistic resemblance and geographic proximity, one can draw a link between the ornament of Khorazim and this synagogue group, and consequently date the group to the first half of the fourth century. There is an artistic innovativeness here, one expressed in an

¹⁷ A few scholars have noted the similarities in the ornamental fragments from this group of synagogues. See Z. Ilan, *Ancient Synagogues in Israel* (Tel Aviv, 1991), 112 (Hebrew); Y. Turnheim, *Architectural Decoration in Northern Eretz-Israel in the Roman and Byzantine Period* (Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University 1987), 182 (Hebrew).

¹⁸ Friezes (Khorazim, ed-Dikkeh, Khawkha), cornices (Khorazim, ed-Dikkeh, er-Rafid), Ionic capitals (Khorazim, ed-Dikkeh, er-Rafid), Corinthian columns (Khorazim, ed-Dikkeh, Khawkha), and Syrian gables (Khorazim, ed-Dikkeh, er-Rafid, Ghadriyye). The decorations on these architectural elements are formal motifs, such as egg-and-dart, bead-and-reel, and anthemion; geometric motifs, such as the guilloche, double meander, and the rope band; floral, such as the acanthus, vine or ivy scroll and rosette; or zoomorphic, such as the eagle and lion. Most of these motifs first appear in the Galilean synagogues

¹⁹ The Corinthian capitals from Khorazim, ed-Dikkeh, and Khawkha were carved as two rows of acanthus leaves close to the background, their upper edges folded downward. The leaves are sunken with a prominent border, their edges touching each other and creating a geometric design consisting of shaded triangles and rhomboids, conferring on the capital a lace-like quality. Only at ed-Dikkeh are the helix and volutes preserved against the kalathos. Corinthian capitals with similar characteristics were dated by Fischer to the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century. See M. Fischer, *The Development of the Corinthian Capital in Palestine from Its Beginning until the Constantinian Period* (Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University 1979), 324 (Hebrew). Zvi U. Ma'oz has included a Corinthian capital from 'En Nashut in the group. See Z. Ma'oz, *Architecture and Art*, 231, Pl. 1:58. At 'En Nashut, however, there is only one row of acanthus leaves, pressed against the background; indeed, the modeling of the acanthus and helix is flatter.

eclectic decorative approach allowing for the use of an assortment of motifs, carved in divergent "styles" and appearing alongside one another in unorthodox ways, as attested on the Khorazim friezes and the ed-Dikkeh cornices. The suggested fourth-century date for the synagogues contradicts Ma'oz's proposal to date them to the fifth century and include them as part of his "Khorazim-'En Nashut cluster."²⁰

B. *The 'En Nashut Synagogue, and Fifth-Century Reliefs and Synagogues*

The synagogue of 'En Nashut (Stratum II) is dated to the mid-fifth century on the basis of coins from the foundational layers below the floor of the building.²¹ A distinctive aspect of the synagogue is its wide use of zoomorphic imagery and the recurrence of the menorah motif in its decorative program.²² The lintel relief from 'Ein Samsam is attributed to the 'En Nashut synagogue, based on its style. It depicts a figure with raised arms (Orant), flanked on either side by lions and eagles.

The style of the 'En Nashut is unique (Figs. 12, 13).²³ All of the carved fragments appear flattened, as they were carved in low relief on a single plane. Nevertheless, there is noticeable variety in the relief work on flat surfaces as compared to the carving of ornamental and geometric designs. The latter were typically done not by gradation, which would have created a sense of depth, as at Khorazim, but by incision. Abstraction and geometric patterning of forms are discernable on most of the ornamental fragments, with motifs spread out next to one another

²⁰ Zvi U. Ma'oz attempts to attribute a few ornamental fragments, such as gables found at Ghadriyye, to the 'En Nashut synagogue, but his evidence is insufficient. See Z. Ma'oz, *Architecture and Art*, Pls. 66, 67.

²¹ The latest coin retrieved from below the floor of the hall at 'En Nashut dates to 383–395 C.E. A total of 193 coins were found just outside the main entrance threshold, in an unsealed locus (L109); of these, 115 were dateable, the latest issued in 408–423 C.E. The coins were deposited in a foundational layer during construction. Another 51 coins were uncovered next to the foundations of the eastern room (L133); 43 of these were identified, the latest dated to 425–450 C.E. Based on these finds, the synagogue can be assigned a mid-fifth-century date. See D. Ariel, "Coins from the Synagogue of En Nashut," *IEJ* 37 (1987): 145–57.

²² The menorah appears on three separate elements: twice on a diagonal Ionic capital, once on a pillar base from the synagogue, and once, alongside a lion, on an element that Ma'oz identifies as part of a jamb. The other designs from the synagogue are floral motifs, such as the rosette, olive branch, vine scroll, and laurel leaf; geometric motifs, such as the double meander inhabited by various motifs, and a band of rhomboids; or assorted formal motifs.

²³ Unusual elements are the lioness, which was executed in relatively high relief, and the knot of Hercules, which adorns a stone beam of the synagogue.



Fig. 12: Relief from 'Ein Samsam.

without overlapping. Motifs are usually aligned with framing elements. Antithetic compositions, not fully symmetrical, were favored. Based on stylistic considerations, a relief of a lioness nursing a cub and another of a bull (Fig. 14)—both located today in the museum at Qasrin—should be attributed to the 'En Nashut synagogue. Both were likely made by the craftsman who sculpted the synagogue relief. The architectural ornament of Synagogue A at Qasrin can also be included in the group. All of these reliefs should be dated to the mid-fifth century, given their stylistic resemblance to 'En Nashut. The style represents a drastic change in the approach to the sculpted surface, composition, and relief work, and in its full espousal of the unnaturalistic.

The stylistic differences between the Khorazim and 'En Nashut synagogues attest to the chronological gap between them: while at Khorazim graded sculpting and depth in the relief work is used, both reflections of late Classical traditions, alongside low reliefs, at 'En Nashut the majority of ornamental fragments are in a uniformly low relief. There is also the propensity for antithetic compositions, very much present at the 'En Nashut synagogue, but appearing on only some of the Khorazim ornamental fragments. The scroll friezes, conches, and gables of Khorazim and of other synagogues of the first half of the fourth century are entirely absent from 'En Nashut.

C. *The Qasrin and Kanaf Synagogues and the Artistic Approach of the Sixth Century*

Numismatic evidence has provided a *terminus post quem* of the beginning of the sixth century (518 C.E.) for the construction of the synagogues at Qasrin (B) and Kanaf.²⁴ Both were embellished with less

²⁴ The first phase (A) of Synagogue B at Qasrin is dated by a hoard of bronze coins deposited at the time of its construction. The hoard included 120 small bronze issues,



Fig. 13: Diagonal Ionic capital, 'En Nashut synagogue.



Fig. 14: Relief from the Golan.

architectural ornament than the synagogues of the previous periods. The most common motif is the twisting vine scroll emerging from an amphora flanked by grape clusters and leaves; also standard are formal motifs (bead-and-reel, egg-and-dart, and acanthus scroll) and wreaths. The Ionic capitals of Qasrin, Yahudiyye, and 'Asaliyye are unique to the Golan, and, based on the Qasrin synagogue, dateable to the beginning of the sixth century.²⁵

As part of the stylistic analysis, I compare these ornamental finds to those of other synagogues: Qusibiyya, 'Asaliyye, Yahudiyye, Dabiyye, Bathra, and a few decorative fragments from Deir 'Aziz, all dated to the sixth century. Three main stylistic trends are evident in this period:

buried in a stone fill between the benches, namely under the higher bench and behind the lower. The latest coin is dated to 498–518 C.E. (Anastasius I). See Z. Ma'oz and A. Killebrew, "Ancient Qasrin Synagogue and Village," *BA* 51 (1988): 19. The first phase (IIIA) of the Kanaf synagogue is dated by four coins retrieved from an earth layer deposited as a floor foundation; the latest coin is dated to 498–518 C.E. (Anastasius I); see D. Ariel, "Coins from the Synagogue at Horvat Kanaf: Preliminary Report," *INJ* 4 (1980): 59–62.

²⁵ Jacqueline Dentzer-Feydy placed these capitals in her Group 7, which she dated to the first half of the sixth century based on the date of the synagogues; see J. Dentzer-Feydy, *Décor architectural*, 177.

- (1) Motifs with a sense of depth. They are not sculpted with the depth of the third and fourth centuries, where the sculptor worked in a graduated fashion, but in a high relief with severe, blockish elements. Examples are the western lintel decoration of the Qasrin synagogue (Fig. 15) and a capital from Bathra (Fig. 16). Both have spacious compositions integrating flattened motifs (the amphorae and leaves) alongside deep, projecting ones (the cauliculus and grape clusters). The cauliculus is thick and elastic; the grape clusters are nebulous masses protruding sharply from the background, with the grapes intimated by incision. This approach is witnessed in other reliefs, such as the projecting amphora on the Yahudiyye lintel.
- (2) Formal motifs, such as the bead-and-reel, egg-and-dart, and acanthus scroll. The motifs generally do not appear in the sequence typical of the third and fourth centuries, nor are they of the same quality. Instead they are isolated elements, such as on the Qasrin or et-Tayibe lintels (Figs. 17, 18).
- (3) Motifs that fade into the background. This is a less frequent feature, appearing for example on the Qasrin and et-Tayibe lintels (Figs. 17, 18). Both are arranged antithetically with a central wreath flanked on either side by decorative elements. The wreaths of both are tied with simple knots from which two opposing streams emerge. The fashioning of the streams on the two lintels is similar: at the knot they are in high relief, but toward the tip they become shallower and eventually fade into the background. The Qasrin and et-Tayibe lintels appear to have been crafted at the same workshop. It is not clear why Ma'oz grouped the two synagogues separately.²⁶

These three stylistic trends point to a classicist renaissance of sorts, perceptible in the sculpted ornament of the synagogues at Qusibiyye, 'Asaliyye, Yahudiyye, Dabiyye, Bathra, as well as a few fragments from Deir 'Aziz. All of these are to be dated to the first half of the sixth century, based on their stylistic similarity to the architectural ornament from Qasrin and Kanaf. This stylistic approach did not stem directly from that used in the Capernaum synagogue, whose architectural ornament was sculpted in a graduated manner (as I show below).

²⁶ Z. Ma'oz, *Golan*, 290–1.



Fig. 15: Lintel, Qasrin synagogue.



Fig. 16: Capital, Bathra.



Fig. 17: Lintel, et-Tayibe synagogue.



Fig. 18: Lintel, Qasrin synagogue.

The stylistic groups of fourth-century Khorazim and fifth-century 'En Nashut represent intermediate phases, without which the new sixth-century style—with its attempt at reviving the sculptural attributes of classical stone carving—would remain an enigma.

In summary, it seems possible to trace a sequence of development in the architectural ornament of Golan synagogues. An example is the evolution of the diagonal Ionic capital at a few sites (cf. Figs. 1, 13, 19). At first glance the Khorazim capital, which is dated to the first half of the fourth century, seems similar to that at 'En Nashut, of the mid-fifth

century. Upon more in-depth consideration, however, a few differences emerge. On the Khorazim capital (Fig. 1) there is a clear separation between the high echinus and the "neck" of the capital; and the echinus has three eggs flanked by darts, the outer eggs partially covered by three to four palmettes. The volutes are small, high, and compact, each with three to four spirals; their outer sides are each covered by an acanthus leaf reaching the base of the capital. On the 'En Nashut capital (Fig. 13), however, carved ornament covers the entire echinus (with no division between echinus and the "neck" of the capital); the echinus has only one egg; and flanking the egg are various motifs in low relief, such as menorahs, amphorae, and birds. The central egg is not flanked by darts, nor do the palmettes of the Khorazim capital appear. The diagonal Ionic capital from Bathra (Fig. 19), dated by its style to the first half of the sixth century, represents an additional development. The capital attempts to imitate the Khorazim type, but the execution of its details is poor. The central egg is enclosed by a circle, similar to the 'En Nashut capital, and flanked by incised lines that only hint at darts. The palmettes of the Khorazim capital are absent.

D. *The Transition from the Fifth to the Sixth Century*

The synagogue at Umm el-Qanatir, which is currently being fully exposed by Chaim Ben-David and Yeshu Dray, will contribute much to the historical, archaeological, and artistic study of Golan synagogues. The report of the excavations have not been published in a final report, only a preliminary one in *Cathedra*.²⁷ With regard to its art and style, and in light of the chronological development I have presented here, the architectural ornament from the synagogue should be attributed to its founding phase, dateable to the last quarter of the fifth or the first quarter of the sixth century. This date emerges from the style of the ornament, which stands between the decorative programs of the fifth ('En Nashut) and sixth centuries (Khanaf). The decorative arch

²⁷ C. Ben-David, "The Synagogue at Deir Aziz," 4. Heinrich Kohl and Carl Watzinger surveyed the synagogue and dated it to the fifth century. See H. Kohl and C. Watzinger, *Antike Synagogen in Galilaea* (Leipzig, 1916), 125-6. According to Chaim Ben-David, the synagogue was constructed at the end of the fifth or during the sixth century, as indicated by its Doric and "basket" capitals. See Z. Ma'oz, *Architecture and Art*, 127. Yoram Tsafirir has suggested that the synagogue portico is a later addition. See Y. Tsafirir, "On the Architectural Origins of the Ancient Galilean Synagogues—A Reconsideration," *Cathedra* 20 (1981): 36 (Hebrew).



Fig. 19: Diagonal Ionic capital, Bathra.

at Umm el-Qanatir resembles fragments from Kerratin in Syria, which are dated by inscriptions to the last quarter of the fifth century.²⁸

III. THE CAPERNAUM SYNAGOGUE AND DIFFERENCES IN DECORATIVE APPROACHES OF THE THIRD AND FOURTH CENTURIES

The debate over the dating of the Galilean synagogues is as heated as ever, a veritable battleground for two groups of scholars. One group dates the synagogues to the third or, at the very latest, the beginning of the fourth century; the other to the end of the fourth but mainly the fifth and sixth centuries. The main claims of the former camp are based on a combination of historical, archaeological, and

²⁸ The resemblance is primarily to fragments of School 7. See H. Butler, *Ancient Architecture in Syria: Publication of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria, in 1904-1905 and 1909*, Division II, Section B: *Northern Syria*, Part 2: *Il-Anderin, Kerratin, Marata* (Leiden, 1908), 71-83. In my opinion, there are a number of early decorative fragments at the site.

artistic-architectural claims. These scholars, among whom Heinrich Kohl and Carl Watzinger, Gideon Foerster, Yoram Tsafrir, and Zvi Uri Ma'oz can be named, have pointed primarily to the architectural and decorative features of the Galilean synagogues as compared to the ornament of contemporaneous structures from the greater region (Syria, Lebanon, and Asia Minor),²⁹ while relying on the archaeological dating of some of the synagogues themselves, such as the 'Ammudim synagogue.³⁰ Another synagogue excavated recently is located at wadi Hamam and its second phase dated lately to the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century.³¹ This is a recently excavated synagogue which apparently testifies to the existence of synagogues in the third and fourth centuries, an opinion I fully support. Contrary to these scholars, those who date the synagogue group to the fifth and sixth century rely mainly on archaeological or stratigraph-

²⁹ For a dating of the synagogues to the second century, see Kohl and Watzinger, *Antike Synagogen*, 40. Ma'oz dates the Galilean synagogues to the end of the second or beginning of the third century based on artistic finds, claiming that the synagogues' architectural ornament derives from Coptic art. He attempts to draw parallels between ornament from Heracleopolis Magna and Saqqara and specific features of the Galilean synagogues, such as: Attic portals, three-panelled lintels with a guilloche frame (unique to synagogues), the Syrian gable adorned with lions (Nabratein), the leopard relief (Nabratein), and the meander panel from Bar'am. However, not only is there no similarity—whether in terms of motif or style—between the Golan finds and the Egyptian comparanda, the Egyptian artistic finds postdate the dating given by Ma'oz himself for the Galilean synagogues. See Z. Ma'oz, "When Were the Galilean Synagogues First Constructed?" *Eretz-Israel* 25 (1996): 416–26 (Hebrew). For a dating of the synagogues in the third century, see G. Foerster, *Galilean Synagogues and Their Relation to Hellenistic and Roman Art and Architecture* (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1972), 151–57 (Hebrew); idem, "The Ancient Synagogues of the Galilee," in *Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Levine (New York, 1992), 289–329; idem, "Has There Indeed Been a Revolution in the Dating of Galilean Synagogues?" in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed. L. Levine (Jerusalem, 2004), 526–9 (Hebrew). For a dating at the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century, see Y. Tsafrir, "The Synagogue at Meroth, the Synagogue at Capernaum, and the Dating of the Galilean Synagogues: A Reconsideration," *Eretz-Israel* 20 (1989): 337–44 (Hebrew).

³⁰ 'Ammudim was dated to the end of the third century. See L. Levine, "Excavations at Horvat ha-'Amudim," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed. idem (Jerusalem, 1981), 80. The synagogues at Gush Halav, Khirbet Shema' and Meiron are also attributed to the third century. See E. Meyers, "The Dating of the Gush Halav Synagogue: A Response to Jodi Magness," in *The Special Problem of the Synagogue*, eds. A. Avery-Peck and J. Neusner (Leiden, 2001), 49–70; J. Stager, "Synagogue Typology and Khirbet Shema': A Response to Jodi Magness," in *ibid.*, 71–9. On the Meiron synagogue, see E. Meyers et al., *Excavations at Ancient Meiron, Upper Galilee, Israel 1971–1972, 1974–1975, 1977* (Cambridge, 1981), 12.

³¹ U. Libner, "Khirbet Wadi Hamam: A Roman Period Village and Synagogue in the Galilee" *Qadmoniot* 139 (2010): 30–40 (Hebrew).

ical data. Excavations at Capernaum led the excavators to date the synagogue to the last decade of the fourth to the middle of the fifth century;³² the latest excavations at Bar'am have indicated to excavators a date not before the first half of the fifth century for the upper (larger) synagogue;³³ and even the well-known inscription from Nabratein is dated to 546 C.E.³⁴ A chief voice among those dating the synagogues to the later period is Jodi Magness. She has utilized stratigraphical, numismatic, and ceramic analysis in overturning the dates that had been put forth by the various synagogue excavators. Magness dates the Capernaum synagogue, for example, to no earlier than the first half of the sixth century.³⁵ On principle, the problem with Magness's approach is its disregard for claims on the architectural and artistic

³² S. Loffreda, "The Late Chronology of the Synagogue of Capernaum," *IEJ* 23 (1973): 37–42.

³³ M. Aviam, "The Ancient Synagogues at Baram," *Qadmoniot* 124 (2002): 122 (Hebrew); idem, "The Ancient Synagogues at Bar'am," in *Continuity and Renewal*, 544–53. Mordechai Aviam notes a few problems with the theory that the synagogues were rebuilt: What were the original structures? Were they synagogues or some other building type? The stones of the later synagogues were taken from earlier synagogues, as shown by the motifs on the Capernaum architectural fragments such as the menorah, incense shovel, and shofar on one of the capitals, and the Ark of the Scrolls in the form of the Temple. Regarding the question of secondary use, there is proof in third-century rabbinic sources, such as the Jerusalem Talmud: "People from Beisan asked R. Immi, 'What is the law on buying stones from one synagogue for building another synagogue?' He said, 'It is forbidden.' Said R. Helbo, 'R. Immi declared that it is forbidden, only because of the anguish.' R. Gurion said, 'The people of Magdela asked R. Simeon b. Laqish, 'What is the law on purchasing stones from one town to build up another town?' He said to them, 'It is forbidden.' R. Immi gave instructions, 'Even [purchasing stones from] the eastern [part of a town for building up] the western [part of the town] is forbidden, because of the destruction [thereby inflicted] on that place [from which the building materials are purchased]." (Meg. 3:1); translated by J. Neusner, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: A Preliminary Translation and Explanation* (Chicago, 1982). The source attests to the construction of synagogues in the second half of the third century. One can suppose that the phenomenon continued in later centuries, as indicated by the imperial edicts of Theodosius II and Justinian, which forbade new synagogue construction. See nos. 41, 49, 54; no. 54 emphasizes the legality of renovating a synagogue. See A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, 1987), 267–72, 295–301, 323–37. On the topic of secondary use, see Foerster, "Has There Indeed Been a Revolution?," 528.

³⁴ N. Avigad, "The Lintel Inscription from the Ancient Synagogue of Kefar Nibiraya," *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society* XIV (1960): 136–45 (Hebrew).

³⁵ In addition to her re-dating of the Capernaum synagogue, Jodi Magness dates Khirbet Shema' to the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century and Gush Halav to no earlier than the second half of the fifth. See J. Magness, "Synagogue Typology and Earthquake Chronology at Khirbat Shema'," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 24/2 (1997): 211–20; idem, "When Were the Galilean-type Synagogues Built?," *Cathedra* 101 (2001): 39–70 (Hebrew); idem, "Synagogues in Ancient Palestine: Problems of Typology and Chronology," in *Continuity and Renewal*, 507–25.

style of the structures. Other scholars have attempted to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the stratigraphy and architectural and artistic character of the synagogues, as is evident in the following by Tsafrir: "In my opinion, a likely explanation is that in the fifth and sixth centuries a few synagogues were built as reconstructions of earlier synagogues, following their architectural plans; or, alternatively, that later synagogues drew on "anachronistic" architectural features (that is, if we refrain from the fruitless argument on their dating and agree on a late construction date)."³⁶ Ma'oz makes a similar suggestion regarding the Capernaum synagogue;³⁷ and recently Mordechai Aviam notes the secondary use of architectural fragments in the Bar'am synagogue.³⁸ This latter observation strengthens the notion that other synagogue buildings, such as Capernaum, incorporate earlier architectural elements in secondary use.

At the crux of the debate on dating is the Capernaum synagogue, the most ornate of the Galilean synagogues. The style of its architectural ornament suggests that three groups of artisans worked on the structure. The first group or master sculpted the lintels on the façade of the main hall. The lintel reliefs are refined and executed in a graduated manner, and one detects the delicate use of a drill. Another group sculpted the friezes, which can be divided into those of the façade and those of the interior walls (the latter were reconstructed at the site at the second-story level on the walls of the structure). The craftsmanship is coarser than that of the lintels; the carved elements appear on a single surface raised off the background; and the gradation on the relief work is less refined. The third group of sculpted lintels appear, as Foerster has shown, in a number of other Galilean synagogues.³⁹ The decorative space of the lintels is divided into three registers framed by a guilloche or vine scroll; their motifs are carved in high relief; the use of a drill is evident; and the registers are adorned in various motifs

³⁶ Tsafrir, *On the Architectural Origins*, 38 (excerpt translated from Hebrew).

³⁷ Z. Ma'oz, "The Synagogue at Capernaum: A Radical Solution," in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research II*, ed. J. R. Humphrey (Portsmouth, 1999), 137–48.

³⁸ Aviam, "Ancient Synagogues," 552.

³⁹ See Foerster, *Galilean Synagogues*, 103–104. Gideon Foerster notes that eight lintels similarly decorated have been found: two at Capernaum, two at 'Ammudim, and one each at Qatzion, Yafia, Safsaf, and Pahma. He claims that some were made by the same hand. Another lintel has recently been uncovered during excavations by Yosef Stepansky at Tiberias.



Fig. 20: Frieze, Capernaum synagogue.

arranged in condense, symmetrical compositions. Although there are differences in these three stylistic groups, it appears as though all three were worked on together in the same workshop, as indicated upon consideration of the sculptural details. For example, the rosette carved on one of the façade lintels is very similar to a rosette on the frieze, even though I have attributed the friezes and lintels to different groups of craftsmen. The carving method of the Capernaum rosettes (Fig. 20), by which small stone “strips” connecting the leaves of the flower were not removed, is characteristic of Late Roman sculpting techniques, as evidenced by early third-century friezes from Beth Shean. Cooperation among the groups of craftsmen is also apparent when considering the detailing of the different groups of capitals outlined by Moshe Fischer.⁴⁰ Since the capitals were dated by Fischer to the second half of the third

⁴⁰ The carving of the leaves on capitals in Fischer’s Groups A and B recalls the friezes from the interior of the synagogue; that of Groups C and D is reminiscent of some of the exterior friezes; and the lintel type which I noted is found at other Galilean synagogues. See M. Fischer, “The Corinthian Capitals of the Capernaum Synagogue: A Revision,” *Levant* XVIII (1986): 131–42.

century, it seems possible to date most of the ornamental elements of the Capernaum synagogue to the same period.

One finds support for this dating at the Khorazim synagogue. The great similarity between the architectural ornament of the Capernaum and Khorazim synagogues, together with the differences between them, leaves no doubt that the later of the two is the Khorazim synagogue, dated to the first half of the fourth century by archaeological data, its capitals, and its other artistic ornament. The sculpted architectural fragments clearly suggest that the Khorazim artisans were familiar with the Capernaum decorative program and influenced by it. The engaged Corinthian capitals at Khorazim are a development of those at Capernaum. The Syrian gable decoration of the two sites is similar, though at Capernaum there is a discernable plastic quality to the sculpted elements, and the egg-and-dart and bead-and-reel designs are meticulously crafted and less stiff than at Khorazim.

In her examination of cornice development at various sites in the region, Yehudit Turnheim does not propose absolute dates but nevertheless claims that the Capernaum cornice is a middle link in the cornice sequence from the Qadesh temple and Sumaqa (dated by her to the end of the second to the second half of the third century) to Beth She'arim and Khorazim.⁴¹

Some scholars may claim that differences in synagogues' decoration stem from divergent techniques for sculpting limestone (at Capernaum) and basalt (at Khorazim). The friezes at Capernaum use only a continuous acanthus scroll element, while other motifs of this sort are employed at Khorazim. The Khorazim artists did not insist on the same decorative uniformity that the Capernaum artists did. Although two types of acanthus scrolls were used at Capernaum, the overall impression is one of unity and harmony. The acanthus scrolls at Capernaum are joined by cauliculi or a row of circles (a vestige of classical acanthus scrolls). Some of the scrolls on the Khorazim friezes are joined by cauliculi, but most are not connected at all, appearing as individual medallions. The frieze decoration at Khorazim seems flatter than the Capernaum frieze scrolls, the relief lower, and the central motifs carved in fewer stages. The gaps between the leaves on the

⁴¹ Y. Turnheim, "Formation and Transformation of the Entablature in Northern Eretz Israel and the Golan in the Roman and Byzantine Periods," *ZDPV* 112 (1996): 128.

Khorazim scrolls are identical in size, further contributing to a compressed, schematic sense.

One of Magness's considerations in ascribing such a late date to the Capernaum synagogue is its similarity in terms of architecture and ornament to churches in northern Syria described by Strube.⁴² However, a comparison of the Galilean synagogues with Syrian churches shows that features of the former are absent in the latter:

- (1) The common decorative motifs of the Galilean synagogues, such as the winged victory holding a wreath, the eagle, the lion, and garlands held by eagles or other figures, are nearly entirely missing from the decorative repertoire of churches of northern Syria.
- (2) The Capernaum and Khorazim cornices are decorated in the so-called Syrian sequence, widespread in northern Palestine in the Late Roman period. In Syria, however, formal motifs—the dentil, bead-and-reel, egg-and-dart, and anthemion—are not incorporated within this sequence but appear as isolated elements removed from their original contexts. The same phenomenon is seen in the Golan in the sixth century.
- (3) Though the decorative friezes of Capernaum and northern Syria might appear similar at first glance, their style of execution differs. The friezes of northern Syria (of the sixth century) have a lace-like quality, a result of the carving of the stone on two planes—the foreground and background—producing sharply contrasting light and shade effects. The acanthus scrolls in northern Syria exhibit patternization, while the Capernaum scrolls, and particularly the central motif inhabiting them, are more graded, resembling the carving techniques of the Late Roman period.

The ornamental fragments from Capernaum should be dated to the second half of the third century, based not only on the Corinthian capitals, as Fischer noted, but also on the fact that the entire decorative assemblage predates that of Khorazim, which was erected in the first half of the fourth century. One is tempted to ask whether the scholars who date the Capernaum synagogue to the sixth century would propose dating the Khorazim synagogue to the same century or even later.

⁴² C. Strube, *Baudekoration* II, 226–36.

IV. THE STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF SYNAGOGUE ORNAMENT IN THE GOLAN AND GALILEE

As a summary, I will exhibit the stylistic development of synagogue ornament in the Golan and Galilee by examining individual motifs that recur at various synagogues. I have chosen the lion and the eagle motifs because of their ubiquity, and have incidentally found that both reflect similar developmental trends.

The lions above the aedicula at Nabratein (Fig. 21) are no later than the third century, as the aedicula was in secondary use on the *bema* of the later synagogue, which went out of use in 306 C.E. They are sculpted in high relief—nearly in the round—their bodies organic, their limbs accentuated by flowing lines, and their manes represented by curving tufts of hair.

The Khorazim lion (Fig. 22), which dates to the first half of the fourth century, is more wooden than the Nabratein lions, its body somewhat cubical in shape with limbs and incised lines on the belly for ribs. For the mane, the artist appears to have been familiar with the curving tufts of hair but nevertheless attempted to create a sense of depth by carving graded orderly rows. The resulting tufts of hair are quadrangular, divided by incised parallel lines, giving the mane a flattened, patternized appearance.

One sees a similar far-reaching trend on the 'Ein Samsam relief (Fig. 23), which is dated on stylistic grounds to the mid-fifth century. The craftsman who carved the relief was aware of the mane design consisting of incised bunches or tufts of hair but discounted it nonetheless, opting instead to depict the mane as even rows of arcuated lines. The result is an abstract geometric design, which taken out of context would scarcely be identified as a lion's mane. The Kanaf lion (Fig. 24), on the other hand, dating to the sixth century, displays a blockish, voluminous quality that evokes the Nabratein lions, though its body is stiff and cylindrical, seemingly glued to the background. Its mane design consists of tufts of hair denoted by shallow incisions and displaying neither the geometric patternization of the manes of the Khorazim and 'En Nashut lions nor the depth and plasticity of those of Nabratein.



Fig. 21: Aedicula, Nabratein synagogue (perhaps upper part of Ark of the Scroll), Rockefeller Museum.



Fig. 22: Relief, Khorazim synagogue (courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority).

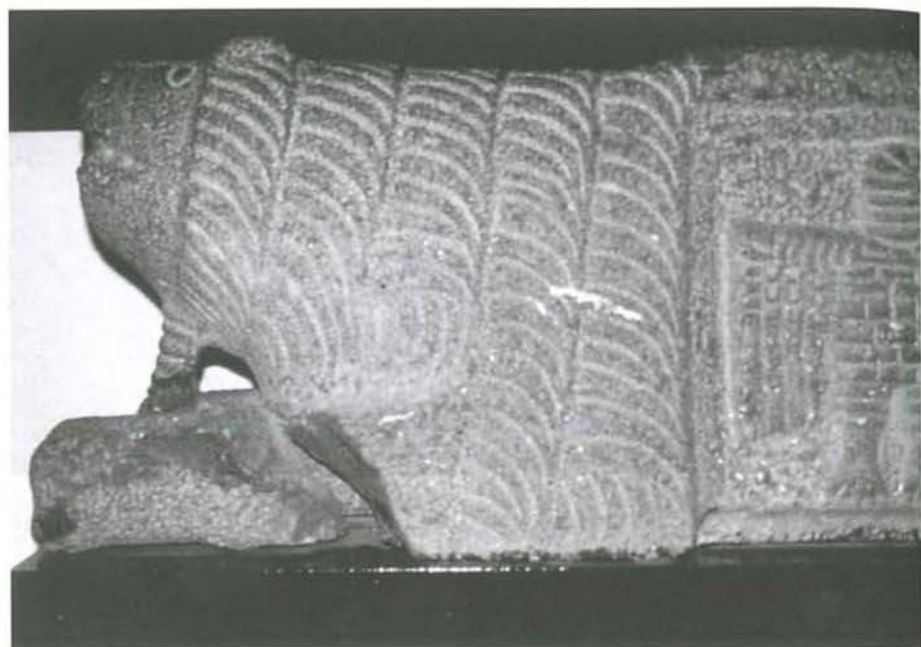


Fig. 23: Detail of relief, 'Ein Samsam.



Fig. 24: Relief, Kanaf synagogue.

This stylistic development is apparent on eagle reliefs as well,⁴³ such as the carved eagle on the top of the arch of the Beth She'arim mausoleum, dated to the end of the second or the third century; or that on the soffit of the Gush H̄alav synagogue lintel, of the third century. They create a sense of plasticity, resulting from overlapping (the belly carved in the foreground, the wings in the background) and gradation in relief depth. There is a similar trend in the Jarabe eagle, portrayed with wings folded, and the Khorazim eagle, which is dated to the mid-fourth century. In both, the belly of the bird was carved in high relief, creating a sense of depth; and the feathers are arranged in stepped rows, oval (Jarabe) or squared in shape (Khorazim). This tendency towards the geometric is evident on the Khorazim lion as well, with its mane design of tightly arranged and graded squares.

The 'Ein Samsam eagle relief, dated to the mid-fifth century, displays an even stronger tendency toward schematization. The body and wings form a single squared geometric unit, carved on a single plane. Each limb is embellished with a different incised pattern, deep or shallow. At Umm el-Qanatir, the eagle on the double capital, apparently once part of the niche over the Ark of the Scroll, is designed in a similar manner. The innovation on the Umm el-Qanatir eagle is the use of overlapping—the body covers over the wings and the wings over the egg pattern at the center of the capital. It should likely be dated, along with the other ornamental fragments from the synagogue, to the last quarter of the fifth or the first half of the sixth century.

The stylistic development of the lions and eagles outlined here is based on an in-depth analysis of all decorative architectural fragments of all the assemblages in question. It shows that one can trace stylistic development in the Galilee and Golan and use the method as a means of relative dating.

⁴³ For the eagle motif in the Galilee Synagogues see: N. Yuval-Hacham, "Like an Eagle Who Rouses His Nestlings': The Meaning of the Eagle Motif in Ancient Synagogues in the Golan and Galilee," *Cathedra* 124 (2007): 65–80, (Hebrew). For eagle pictures, see *ibid*, Figs. 1–7.



Fig. 25: Adapted from R. Hachlili, "Late Antique Jewish Art from the Golan," in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research*, ed. J. Humphrey (Ann Arbor, 1995), 191.

THE GREEK BIBLE IN THE MEDIEVAL SYNAGOGUE¹

Nicholas de Lange

I. INTRODUCTION

A decree of Emperor Justinian I dated February 8th 553 states in the preamble:

We have learnt from their [i.e. the Hebrews'] petitions [*proseleuseis*], which they have addressed to us, that while some maintain the Hebrew language only and want to use it in reading the Holy Books others consider it right to admit Greek as well, and they have already been quarrelling among themselves about this for a long time.²

Commentators have argued long and hard about where this quarrel took place (was it in Constantinople or in the Land of Israel?) and which side promoted change and which side defended the status quo. Another question relates to the position of the Hellenists: did they want a reading only in Greek or in addition to a Hebrew reading? My own view is that the dispute did not take place in Israel but presumably in Constantinople and perhaps in other places, and arose from efforts by the Hebraist party to impose a reading in Hebrew on congregations which had traditionally read the Bible in Greek. As I have tried to show elsewhere, there is no real evidence for the use of Hebrew by Jews in Europe in more than a symbolic way before the end of the eighth century (the evidence in general for European Judaism in the seventh and eighth centuries is admittedly very thin)³. The dominant language in this earlier period was clearly Greek. From the year 800 on, there is increasing evidence for the use of Hebrew, and by the turn of the millennium it is clear that the primary language of

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Program in Hellenic Studies at Princeton University in 2005. I am grateful to those who commented on it, particularly Peter Schäfer and Peter Brown.

² Justinian, Novella 146; translation in A. Linder, ed., *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, 1987), 408.

³ N. de Lange, "The Hebrew Language in the European Diaspora," in *Studies on the Jewish Diaspora in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, eds. B. Isaac and A. Oppenheimer (Tel Aviv, 1996), 111–37.

written culture and worship for Jews in Byzantium and elsewhere in Europe was Hebrew, a language which came to be uniquely identified with the Jews. Consequently I interpret the mid-sixth century quarrel as an early attempt by Hebraists to replace Greek by Hebrew in the synagogue, stemming primarily from national motives.

In the novel of 553 Justinian comes down strongly on the Hellenist side. He states:

We decree, therefore, that it shall be permitted to those Hebrews who want it to read the Holy Books in their synagogues and, in general, in any place where there are Hebrews, in the Greek language before those assembled and comprehending, or possibly in our ancestral language (we speak of the Italian language), or simply in all the other languages, changing language and reading according to the different places; and that through this reading the matters read shall become clear to all those assembled and comprehending, and that they shall live and act according to them.

While expressing a strong preference for the Septuagint version (the Old Testament of the Church), the emperor also grants permission to use the translation of Aquila, 'although he was a gentile and in some readings differs not a little from the Septuagint.'⁴

In making this concession the emperor recognises a preference for Aquila among Jews, and in this he is following Origen more than three centuries earlier; Origen contrasts this 'Jewish' version with the 'Christian' versions, the Septuagint and Theodotion. In a letter written around 248 to Sextus Julius Africanus, Origen states that Aquila 'is used for preference by those Jews who know Hebrew, as being the most successful translator of all.'⁵ In permitting the use of Aquila, Justinian thus seems to be offering a sop to the Hebraist faction.

Nowadays the consensus among specialists is that all these versions, the Septuagint, Aquila, and Theodotion, as well as another version attributed to Symmachus, are of Jewish, not Christian, origin. Origen included all four, along with some other versions, in his great synoptic

⁴ The Greek text of the novella uses the form *Akylas*, which is also the form of the name used, in Hebrew transcription, in the rabbinic literature. In what follows we shall retain the more familiar Latin form. By 'gentile' Justinian presumably means a gentile by birth: both the Talmud and the Christian author Epiphanius say that he was a convert to Judaism.

⁵ Text and French translation in M. Harl and N. de Lange, eds, *ORIGÈNE: Philocalie, 1-20, sur les écritures et la Lettre à Africanus sur l'Histoire de Suzanne. Introduction, texte, traduction et notes* (Paris, 1983), 526-7.

compilation, the Hexapla, along with the Hebrew text in both Hebrew and Greek letters.⁶ Of the Hexapla, only fragments and a Syriac translation survive. The versions, or perhaps we should call them revisions, of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus (called by Origen collectively 'the Three'), also survive in fragments only. All of them would have circulated among Jews in the second and third centuries. Thus in the later Roman period Jews used a diversity of Greek Bible texts: there was apparently no single authorised version, even if Aquila enjoyed greater favour than the others.

Whenever later texts, Jewish and Christian, mention the Jews' Greek Bible they always refer to it as *Akylas*. This is the case in the Talmud, where some fragments are quoted.⁷ Medieval Christian texts sometimes cite him too, in the context of Jewish exegesis of scripture: for example the *Life of Constantine*, recording the Byzantine missionary's debate with Jews in Khazaria, gives a biblical quotation that is said to come from Aquila.⁸

Recent manuscript discoveries shed further light on the continued use of Aquila's version by Jews in the Middle Ages. In what follows I shall take a closer look at this new evidence, and consider what it tells us about the use of Greek Bible translations in the medieval synagogue.

II. THE GREEK BIBLE IN BYZANTIUM: TESTIMONIES

There is a curious silence on this subject in medieval Jewish writings: no Jewish source refers unambiguously to the use of Greek biblical versions by Jews in Byzantium. We have no Jewish manuscripts of the entire Bible in Greek, or even of the Pentateuch. The only book preserved in Greek in its entirety from the medieval synagogue is a very short one, the prophecy of Jonah, which figures as the prophetic reading in the afternoon service on the Day of Atonement. The text is preserved in two fifteenth-century prayer books, one now in the Bodleian

⁶ N. Marcos, *Introducción a las versiones griegas de la Biblia*, 2nd ed. (Madrid, 1998), 209–26.

⁷ See most recently G. Veltri, *Libraries, Translations, and 'Canonic' Texts: The Septuagint, Aquila, and Ben Sira in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Leiden, 2006).

⁸ M. Kantor and R. White, eds, *The Vita of Constantine and The Vita of Methodius* (Ann Arbor, 1976), 27.

Library in Oxford and the other in the University Library, Bologna.⁹ The language of these two texts (which are similar but not identical) is essentially medieval Greek, with a number of striking archaic features, and they cling very closely to the diction of the Hebrew.

In 1547, an Italian printer, Eliezer Soncino, printed in Constantinople a Pentateuch containing the Hebrew text, the Aramaic targum of Onkelos, Rashi's commentary, and two further translations, one into Spanish and one into Greek, the whole printed in Hebrew characters. It is a very interesting question whether the Greek translation was prepared for this publication, or whether it represents a traditional Greek text. The latter position has been argued in a recent doctoral thesis.¹⁰ This version too combines colloquial and archaic features in its language.

These two important testimonies, which have been known for some time, are supplemented by a number of fragmentary manuscript remains, many of them discovered in recent years. Most of this evidence comes from the Cairo Genizah.¹¹

A. Translations

In addition to the previously mentioned book of Jonah preserved in its entirety in two Greek-rite prayer books, a fragment of the book of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) in Greek survives in the Genizah: the translation clings very closely to the word-order and syntax of the Hebrew, and each verse in Greek is preceded by its opening word in Hebrew.¹² I believe it may come (like the Jonah version) from a prayer book, in this case for the festival of Tabernacles, for which Kohelet is a prescribed reading.

⁹ See D. C. Hesseling, "Le livre de Jonas," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 10 (1901): 208–17. The so-called 'Graecus Venetus' translation, while it shows interesting traces of Jewish exegesis, as well as of Aquila and other ancient versions, is generally thought to be the work of a Christian translator. See Marcos, *Introducción*, 185–6.

¹⁰ D. Arar, "Le Pentateuque de Constantinople (1547). Une traduction littérale?" (Diss. Paris IV, 2005).

¹¹ I have collected some of the fragments in my book *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah* (Tübingen, 1996). This edition should be read in conjunction with R. Steiner, "Textual and Exegetical Notes to Nicholas de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah*," *JQR* 89 (1998): 155–69, and I. Ta-Shma, "Paršanut miqra bizantit mimifneh hammeot hay-Şhay" a" (Hebrew), in idem, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, Vol. III. *Italy and Byzantium* (Jerusalem, 2005), 241–58.

¹² N. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 71–8.

B. *Study aids*

Glossaries: A palimpsest from the Genizah preserves part of a glossary listing in parallel columns Hebrew words (from Exodus, Jeremiah, and Isaiah) with their Greek translations.¹³ The Greek words are written in Greek characters. A *terminus ante quem* around 900 C.E. has been suggested.

Another fragmentary glossary from the Genizah with a similar layout lists Hebrew words from Malachi and Job with their translations.¹⁴ Here, though, the Greek words are written in Hebrew characters, and I believe this text is a little later, probably from the tenth or eleventh century.

A more developed form of glossary combines Hebrew lemmata, Greek translations, and occasional short Hebrew comments. Sometimes two alternative renderings are given. There are formal similarities with Old French glossaries such as the Basle Glossary edited by M. Banitt.¹⁵ A Genizah fragment preserves part of such a glossary on 1 Kings.¹⁶

C. *Marginal and interlinear glosses*

Genizah fragments of biblical books in Hebrew sometimes have Greek glosses, in Greek characters, between the lines or in the margins. These glosses simply give the Greek translation of a single Hebrew word. One example, containing four glosses from the Book of Proverbs, has so far been published.¹⁷

Similar interlinear glosses in Greek script are also found in a Genizah fragment of scholia on Genesis and Exodus.¹⁸

Outside the Genizah, an incomplete copy of the Former Prophets now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, has 123 glosses written in the margins, in several different hands, mostly in Greek (in Hebrew

¹³ N. Tchernetska, J. Olszowy-Schlanger and N. de Lange, "An Early Hebrew—Greek Biblical Glossary from the Cairo Genizah," *Revue des études juives* 166 (2007): 91–128.

¹⁴ N. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 79–84.

¹⁵ M. Banitt, *Le glossaire de Bâle* (Jerusalem, 1972).

¹⁶ N. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 155–63.

¹⁷ H. Rüger, "Vier Aquila-Glossen in einem hebräischen Proverbien-Fragment aus der Kairo-Geniza," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 50 (1959): 275–7.

¹⁸ N. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 85–116.

letters); a few are annotations in Hebrew.¹⁹ Sometimes Greek glosses and Hebrew comments are mixed together, and occasionally there are two alternative Greek translations of the same Hebrew word or phrase.

D. *Scholia*

These short comments in Hebrew on individual words and phrases of the biblical text stand somewhere between the glossary and the commentary. The genre has a long history in Greek scholarship, and is also found in the midrashic literature. From the Genizah we have scholia on Genesis, Exodus, and Joshua containing occasional Greek translations of biblical words.²⁰

E. *Greek Words in Commentaries*

It is quite common for Byzantine biblical commentaries written in Hebrew, by both Rabbanites and Karaites, to contain Greek glosses. Generally these make some point (whether lexical or syntactic) that is hard to make in Hebrew alone.

An early example is a large Genizah fragment of a commentary on Ezekiel and the Minor Prophets written on a rotulus (vertical scroll) and datable on codicological grounds to the late tenth century. The author, otherwise unknown, is named Reuel.²¹ Other examples of commentaries using Greek words have been found in the Genizah,²² and there are also complete commentaries, mainly from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, preserved in later copies, that do the same.

III. MEDIEVAL REMAINS AND ANCIENT VERSIONS

Despite the very fragmentary nature of these materials, I believe they should be considered evidence for the use of actual versions of the Bible, and not just *ad hoc* translations of isolated words and phrases

¹⁹ N. de Lange, "The Greek Glosses of the Fitzwilliam Museum Bible," in *Zutot 2002*, ed. S. Berger, M. Brocke and I. Zwiép (Dordrecht, 2003), 138–47.

²⁰ N. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 85–125.

²¹ N. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 165–294. See also C. Aslanov, "Les gloses judéo-helléniques du 'Commentaire de Re'uel sur Ezéchiel' découvert à la Geniza du Caire," *Revue des études juives* 157 (1998): 7–45.

²² For an example see N. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, 127–54.

made by teachers and commentators. It is clear that at least some books existed in Greek in the Byzantine synagogue, since we have the Book of Jonah and the fragment of Kohelet. But these are relatively marginal books that had a distinctive liturgical setting. My main argument therefore rests on another consideration: the nature of the Greek glosses and a comparison with the remains of the ancient versions.²³

To begin with, the fragment of a Greek translation of Kohelet shares some characteristics of the ancient Greek version which can be found today in Christian Bibles. This ancient version, which adheres very closely to the word order and grammar of the Hebrew, is generally thought to have been done in Palestine in the early second century C.E., and some have maintained that it was by Aquila himself.

Any two translations that adopt a strict word-for-word approach to translating are bound to have some similarities, so I shall merely draw attention here to one particularly striking parallel. The ancient version of Kohelet uses the preposition *syn* to render Hebrew *et*, the particle that marks the definite direct object. This is a solecism that is commonly associated with Aquila, who supposedly took great pains in rendering the 'inclusive' Hebrew particles. Normally in Greek *syn*, which means 'with,' governs the dative case, whereas in the nature of things when *syn* is used for *et* it is usually followed by the accusative. The Genizah fragment also uses *syn* (with the accusative) for *et*, but less systematically than the ancient version. This is a startling usage in a medieval text, as *syn* is not used at all in ordinary medieval Greek, and is never found with the accusative in Greek in any period outside the synagogue.

Another feature of the ancient translation is the rendering of Hebrew *gam*, 'also,' by Greek *kaige*. Our fragment does not follow this practice, but instead translates *gam* systematically by *gar* (which normally means 'for' (conj.) in Greek), perhaps because of the similarity in sound. This usage points to a theory and practice of translation, going far beyond a casual, utilitarian approach.

The vocabulary and syntax of our version belong somewhere between that of the ancient version and modern Greek. Examples of late vocabulary are *lêsmonô*, 'to forget' (first attested in the fifth century),

²³ I have discussed this issue in greater detail, with examples from the Genizah fragments in "La tradition des «révisions juives» au moyen âge: les fragments hébraïques de la Geniza du Caire," in "Selon les Septante", *Hommage à Marguerite Harl*, ed. G. Dorival and O. Munnich (Paris, 1995), 133–43.

and *mertikon* ‘a share’ (not found before the sixth century). Another medieval feature of the language is that prepositions are generally constructed with the accusative, rarely with the genitive, but never with the dative, which had died out between the time of the ancient translation and that when the Genizah fragment was written.

Consequently we can say that while the fragment is not an actual copy of an ancient version, it stands in a tradition that is ultimately derived from the ancient version preserved in the Christian Church and shares its approach to translation.

The Genizah palimpsest glossary is unfortunately extremely hard to read, because the Hebrew top writing exactly covers the lines of the glossary beneath. There are only some twenty cases where it is possible to read both the Hebrew lemma and substantial parts of the Greek gloss, even with the help of ultra-violet light.

Often it seems on the face of it as though the strongest influence is from the Septuagint. This apparent indication that a knowledge of the Septuagint faded much more slowly among Jews than we normally imagine should be treated with great caution, however, for two reasons. Firstly, we can only be confident that a gloss reflects the Septuagint rather than the Three when we have the readings of both the Septuagint and the Three. In many cases we have no hint of the reading of any of the Three. Secondly, there is a possibility that there were other revisions, now lost, which were closer to the Septuagint than the Three are. On the other hand, there are certainly places where our fragment agrees with one or more of the Three against the Septuagint, and in general it seems closer to Aquila than to any of the other ancient versions.²⁴

The Genizah fragment of a glossary on Malachi and Job similarly displays very striking agreements with Aquila, both in the use of words characteristic of his vocabulary and in the way compound words are built up according to the very distinctive method developed by Aquila, e.g. *gennêmatízw* (to beget), *aposkolopízw* (to remove a stumbling block), or *spílôma* (fine gold, Hebrew *ketem*). On the other hand, there are no

²⁴ For further details see N. de Lange, “An Early Hebrew–Greek Bible Glossary from the Cairo Genizah and Its Significance for the Study of Jewish Bible Translations into Greek,” in *Studies in Hebrew Literature and Culture Presented to Albert van der Heide on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth birthday*, ed. M. F. J. Baasten and R. Munk (Dordrecht, 2007), 31–9.

substitutions of *syn* for *et*, which is one of the tell-tale signs of Aquila's version, and there are some late words, such as *sapoúnin* for soap.

The numerous marginal annotations in Greek in the Fitzwilliam Library Former Prophets share some of the characteristics already noted. They are written in medieval Greek, mostly of a colloquial type (some of the Greek words are not otherwise attested). As mentioned above, in some cases we have two alternative Greek translations of one Hebrew word. This is a feature of some of the Genizah fragments too, and it seems to me to point to a situation where several more or less different versions were in use, rather like the competing English translations current today. Sometimes glosses are repeated: the same Hebrew word in two or more places is translated by the same Greek word. This striking consistency of translation can also be paralleled in the Genizah materials, and seems to me to confirm the view that we are dealing with a tradition of translations, and not just *ad hoc* renderings. There are some cases where the renderings are identical or close to those of the ancient versions, including the Septuagint.²⁵

Not to prolong the discussion unnecessarily, the same features can be identified in the other types of materials listed above, including the Greek glosses embedded in commentaries written in Hebrew: they combine elements of medieval colloquial Greek and much older strata of the language; they are sometimes quite consistent in rendering the same Hebrew word, not only within a particular text but from text to text as well; and they display some striking similarities with 'the Three,' particularly but not exclusively Aquila.

The evidence as a whole, which it must be stressed is diverse in terms of date, genre, geographical origin, and religious background (it includes both Rabbanite and Karaite materials), points towards the following conclusions:

1. The Genizah fragments and other Byzantine Jewish texts mentioned preserve traces of lost Greek Bible versions.
2. These versions, which existed in a variety of forms, and whose language was a mixture of classical or Roman-period and vernacular medieval Greek, represent a living tradition that is essentially independent of that of the Byzantine church.

²⁵ For examples see N. de Lange, "The Greek Glosses," and S. Sznol, "The Greek Glosses of Fitzwilliam Museum Ms 364*. Some notes," *Bulletin of Judaean-Greek Studies* 40 (Summer 2007): 32–5.

3. This tradition is largely derived from Aquila, but is also influenced by other ancient Jewish versions.

IV. THE USE OR USES OF THE GREEK BIBLE IN THE MEDIEVAL SYNAGOGUE

On the basis of the evidence discussed so far, it can be confidently asserted that when Byzantine Jews studied the Hebrew Bible, whether as children or as adults, they did not simply translate freely into their spoken Greek, but used actual translations with which they were familiar. These translations employed many words or forms that no longer existed in the spoken Greek language. Bearing in mind that Jews had no formal education in Greek, we must suppose that they were taught to understand the Greek of the Bible versions. In Jewish education the study of Hebrew was the main object, but the Greek versions played a key role. This was true both of Karaites and of Rabbanites.

An intriguing question is whether young Jews learnt these Greek versions by heart. This is an attractive hypothesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, it would help to explain the facility with which they are quoted by annotators and commentators. Secondly, it would help to explain why more actual manuscripts of the Greek version have not been found, but only fragmentary quotations. If Byzantine Jews learnt the Greek by heart as children they would not need written copies. This claim evokes a real oral tradition, possibly with a prejudice against writing down the Greek translation. It is by no means impossible that in Byzantine synagogues when the Bible was read aloud in Hebrew each verse was followed by the translation, recited from memory. This would have the effect of fixing it in people's minds, reinforcing their childhood learning. This is pure speculation, based on the way the Aramaic targum was used liturgically (and still is in some communities), but the presence in the Ecclesiastes fragment, as well as in the Constantinople Pentateuch, of the first word of the Hebrew at the beginning of each Greek verse at least hints at something of the kind.

The Greek translation of Jonah, as has already been mentioned, is preserved in two manuscript prayer books. In one of these (the Bologna manuscript) each successive verse is first given in Hebrew and then in Greek, which strongly endorses the hypothesis just put forward. The Oxford manuscript, however, has a different presentation: the Greek text of the entire book is preceded by the first verse of Jonah

in Hebrew, and followed by the last verses of the traditional reading (Micah 7:18–20) in Hebrew. Thus in this case, at least, the Greek reading did not accompany the Hebrew reading but substantially replaced it. I am inclined to think it unlikely that this was an innovation in the late medieval synagogue, and more likely to have been a practice sanctioned by ancient usage, perhaps even going back to the time when the use of Hebrew readings was first introduced into the Greek-speaking synagogue, around the time of Justinian's novella.

V. JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN BIBLES

A question that is worth raising before we proceed to some general conclusions is the possible influence of this Jewish Greek Bible tradition on that of the Church.

The Ambrosian Library in Milan contains an early witness to the text of the Greek Bible, a copy of the Octateuch, now incomplete, written in majuscule letters in the fifth century C.E. The editors refer to this manuscript as F. A much later, minuscule hand, known as F^b, has inserted numerous variants in the margins. At one point (on Gen. 47:31) a variant is attributed to *to Ioud[aikon]*, i.e. 'the Jewish (text)'. (A similar attribution is found in the marginal annotations of another LXX manuscript, known as *i*.) A comparison of the readings of F^b with the Jewish evidence reveals striking similarities which are beyond any possibility of mere coincidence.

How did these 'Jewish' renderings make their way into a Christian manuscript? The simplest explanation is that they were put there by a Jewish convert to Christianity who was familiar with the Jewish tradition. However, the term *to Ioud[aikon]* suggests the use of a written text, and most likely one written in Greek letters, since Christian scholars, unless they were converts, usually could not read Hebrew writing. Such a text must have been very old, as we do not find any continuous texts written by Jews in Greek letters after the sixth or seventh century, and even occasional use of Greek letters by Jews is very rare after that. If we exercise a little imagination, though, and ask ourselves what happened to the Greek Bibles that were read in synagogues in the time of Justinian and later, before the change to Hebrew, it is easy to suppose that some of them would have made their way into the hands of Christian scholars.

VI. RAMIFICATIONS

We are now in a position to summarise some of the ramifications of these discoveries.

- a. Given the evident influence of the ancient versions on the medieval Jewish materials, the question arises how these materials can best be exploited by scholars working on the text of these ancient Greek versions. It is tempting to use them as evidence for the older versions, in the same way as Christian texts based on Origen's Hexapla. This is the way that Rüger understands the Proverbs glosses.²⁶ John Wevers includes the readings of F^b in the apparatus to his editions of the LXX Pentateuch.²⁷ Joseph Ziegler takes a more nuanced view: he discusses the Genizah glossary in the introduction to his Göttingen edition of Job, and accepts some of the glosses as representing readings of Aquila.²⁸ This entire question deserves to be more fully discussed by those responsible for the editions. As it happens, a new edition of Origen's Hexapla is in preparation. It would be sensible for the editors to take account of the witness of the medieval Jewish manuscripts, while resisting the natural temptation simply to assimilate them to that of the Christian manuscripts and citations.
- b. The knowledge of the existence of a continuous use of Greek Bible versions among Jews significantly affects how we read and interpret other Jewish texts composed wholly or partly in a Greek-speaking milieu, notably the Palestinian Talmud, the midrashim, and some of the targumim. A first step could be the identification of actual quotations from the Bible in Greek in this literature. Studies have already been published listing Greek words in some midrashic texts. However, the studies in question merely list Greek words, without distinguishing between biblical citations, words quoted in the original in anecdotes, and loan-words (which cannot really be considered as foreign words). Still, one can identify some significant parallels with the ancient versions in these lists, and this justifies a certain optimism about extending the search to the whole of the Palestinian rabbinic literature.

²⁶ Rüger, "Vier Aquila-Glossen."

²⁷ J. Wevers, ed., *Genesis* (Göttingen, 1974), *Exodus* (Göttingen, 1991), *Leviticus* (Göttingen, 1986), *Numeri* (Göttingen, 1982), *Deuteronomium* (Göttingen, 1977).

²⁸ J. Ziegler, ed., *Iob* (Göttingen, 1991), 160.

But the identification of verbal parallels is only a first step. The investigation needs to be broadened to take into account the possible exegetical impact of the Greek versions on the Talmud, midrash, and targums, even where there is no verbal dependence. It is hardly likely that Jews who read the Bible in Greek were able, even if they so desired, to exclude all trace of it from texts composed in other languages.²⁹

- c. The next body of writings that needs to be studied from this perspective is the commentary literature from Byzantium compiled in Hebrew. Attention has been drawn in the past to the presence of Greek words in commentaries and other works composed in Hebrew by both Karaites (such as Jacob ben Reuben, Tobias ben Moses, or Judah Hadassi) and Rabbanites (e.g. Tobias b. Eliezer, Meyuhas ben Elia), but no attempt has been made to study the possible influence of the Greek versions either on these words or more widely on the commentaries (or conversely, the influence of the commentaries on the versions).

For example, a comment in the Fitzwilliam Former Prophets says that the phrase *šoq 'al yerah* (Judges 15:8), which is normally taken to mean 'leg upon thigh,'³⁰ actually means 'infantry upon cavalry' (*pezón epi kavalári*), and the same interpretation is given (in Hebrew, not Greek) by a Byzantine Karaite commentator, Aaron ben Joseph (ca. 1260–1320). The same commentator explains *ubeḥohim* (1Samuel 13:6, normally taken as 'in thickets' or 'in brambles'), as 'in castles,' which is what our annotator says (*en kastéllia*). Many other examples could be given of cases where these commentators and the Greek glosses echo one another.

Two tasks face researchers in this area: one is to study all the Byzantine Hebrew literature (much of it unpublished), so as to collect the Greek glosses and compare them with the Greek biblical tradition; the other is to read the biblical exegesis in these texts

²⁹ Sznol, "The Greek Glosses," points out some interesting parallels with the exegetical tradition underlying Jonathan's Targum, and draws attention to the use of this targum by later western European commentators (Rashi and Kimhi). It is by no means self-evident, however, that the Byzantine commentators derived their exegesis from the targum: it is at least equally possible that both rely on an earlier tradition of Jewish exegesis, embodied in the Greek translations.

³⁰ A. Berlin and M. Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York, 2006) translates 'He gave them a sound and thorough thrashing,' with the note 'Lit. "He smote them leg as well as thigh, a great smiting."'

carefully with an eye on the Greek Bible texts, so as to see the relationship between it and the Greek versions.

- d. The fourth line of further research concerns the possible influence of the continuing Jewish tradition of the Greek Bible on the Christian tradition. In the past where the influence of the 'Three' was discerned in Christian manuscripts of the Greek Bible the tendency was to speak of 'hexaplaric' influence, in other words to attribute it to the impact of Origen's compilation which included the full texts of the Three as well as some other versions. The influence of Origen's Hexapla on the text of the Christian Greek Bible in the centuries immediately following its production was indeed considerable, but the original copy of the Hexapla was lost in the seventh century and it is not clear that a complete copy was ever made. Some later Greek manuscripts reveal a great deal of influence of the Three, and the possibility should at least be investigated that this is due to interference in the Christian textual tradition from the Jewish tradition.

VII. SUMMARY

Recent manuscript discoveries, mainly from the Cairo Genizah, have shown unambiguously that Greek-speaking Jews in the Middle Ages made use of Greek translations of the biblical books both for purposes of study and in the synagogal liturgy. Couched in a mixture of medieval colloquial and ancient literary Greek, these translations were not a creation of the Middle Ages, but were part of a living tradition going back to the ancient Greek versions, with significant but not exclusive influence from the version of Aquila.³¹

³¹ The texts mentioned in this article are now available online at gbbj.org.

JUDEO-GREEK OR GREEK SPOKEN BY JEWS?

Cyril Aslanov

Research on Jewish languages has been deeply influenced by Max Weinreich's monumental work on the history of Yiddish.¹ Besides for his comprehensive survey of the mechanisms of crystallization of Yiddish, this scholar allowed himself to project the fusion (*oyfshmeltsung*) model,² which was legitimate as far as Yiddish was concerned, to other Jewish languages of which he seems to have had only a second-hand knowledge. This methodological bias led him to assume that throughout the ages, the Greek-speaking Jews developed a specific language, the status of which toward general Greek was comparable to the status of Yiddish toward the German dialects. He called Yavanic (*yevonish*) this specific Judeo-Greek language conceived as an uninterrupted entity.³

Weinreich's seminal assumption was adopted by Paul Wexler, whose *Explorations in Judeo-Slavic Linguistics* assumes the existence of a well-crystallized Judeo-Greek throughout the High Middle Ages.⁴ However, the data he collected to illustrate the impact of this lost language on Central and Eastern European Jewish and Gentile languages are very heterogeneous. Furthermore, few of them are reliable. Most of the time, this scholar points to phenomena that go back to the influence of Hellenic Christianity on the languages of the Balkans or Eastern Europe.⁵

A significant turning point in Judeo-Greek studies is Nicholas de Lange's edition of *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah*.⁶ Although

¹ M. Weinreich, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh*, 4 vols., (New York, 1973) = Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, trans. S. Noble (Chicago, 1980).

² Weinreich, *Geshikhte*, I, 32–42 = Weinreich, *History*, 29–38.

³ Weinreich, *Geshikhte*, I, 65–9; 80–3 = Weinreich, *History*, 61–5; 76–9.

⁴ P. Wexler, *Explorations in Judeo-Slavic Linguistics*, (Leiden, 1987), 13–59.

⁵ As in the case of παρασκευή "Friday" to which Wexler devotes a long development. See Wexler, *ibid.*, 19–23. Needless to say, all his examples can be considered the result of Hellenization without any Jewish intermediary.

⁶ N. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, (Tübingen, 1996).

most of these texts are written in Hebrew,⁷ they are occasionally interspersed with Greek words or phrases that are almost always written in Hebrew letters. I would like to focus on these valuable pieces of evidence in order to try to answer two questions:

1. Can we consider the Greek component of the material gathered by de Lange a crystallized language of its own, irreducible to the coterritorial dialects of Demotic Greek?
2. Does this material that can tentatively be dated from the tenth to the twelfth century⁸ display any continuity toward earlier or later stages of Greek-speaking Jewry?

In order to answer the first question, I would like to apply the parameters formulated by Chaim Rabin (from an external sociolinguistic viewpoint)⁹ or by Moshe Bar-Asher (from the internal perspective of linguistic hybridization).¹⁰ As for the second question, it should be treated more specifically from the perspective of Greek linguistics. We should determine whether the continuity between late antique, medieval, and modern Jewish Greek (or Judeo-Greek) might be ascribed to the particular dynamics that can be observed from the viewpoint of Jewish interlinguistics. Or, alternatively, does every period where a specifically Jewish blend of Greek is attested constitute a case of its own, the apparent affinity between them being only the result of the remarkable continuity characteristic of the history of the Greek language in general? If the second branch of the alternative is correct, each stage of Jewish Greek should be considered a specification of the coterritorial variety of general Greek rather than the continuation of the previous stage of Judeo-Greek.

⁷ The only continuous Greek text is a translation of the Ecclesiastes. See de Lange, *op. cit.*, 71–8.

⁸ See *ibid.*, Preface.

⁹ C. Rabin, “What Constitutes a Jewish Language?” *International Journal of the Society of Language*, 30 (1981): 19–28.

¹⁰ M. Bar-Asher, “Paramètres pour l’étude des judéo-langues et de leurs littératures,” in *Linguistique des langues juives et linguistique générale*, eds., F. Alvarez-Péreyre and Jean Baumgarten (Paris, 2003), 69–86.

I. WAS THERE A SPECIFICALLY JUDEO-GREEK LANGUAGE IN
HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN TIMES?

The situation of contact between Hellenistic Greek and local languages spoken in various parts of the *Oikoumene* exerted a deep influence on both the dominant language and the dominated one. In certain cases, however, the process of acculturation was clearly unilateral. Thus, in Alexandria and some other parts of the Mediterranean, the Jews gave up the use of the ancestral languages and became monolingual speakers of Greek since the third century B.C. at least. The use of Greek even in the framework of the cult is perhaps the most obvious piece of evidence for the adaptation to the standards of Hellenism. Thus, the textual monuments left by Hellenistic Judaism should be analyzed according to the fundamental criterion of monolingualism vs. bilingualism. Such texts as the LXX or the New Testament obviously reflect a situation of bilingualism where the interference of either the source language (Hebrew in the case of the Alexandrine Bible) or the coterritorial language (Palestinian Judeo-Aramaic in the case of the Gospels) may explain many syntactic particularities.¹¹ Clearly, the pressure exerted by Hebrew in the case of the LXX text, by Aramaic in the case of the Gospels may lead to the conclusion that the Greek used there is a kind of Judeo-Greek. However, such an assumption would be legitimate only if the text was directly written in Greek, for in the case of a translation, the Jewish character is not inherent to the language. Therefore, the text of the Gospels may be viewed as a quite genuine specimen of a semi-literary blend of Greek deeply influenced by the Judeo-Aramaic substrate.

On the other hand, the literary production of Alexandrine Judaism displays no interference of the Semitic substrate. If there was any specific blend of Greek spoken by the Jews in Egypt, it had no reflection on the level of the literary text. Such texts as Ezechiel's *Exagoge* or Philo's commentaries are clear examples of a complete acculturation to the standards of Greek literacy. As for the conjectural Judeo-

¹¹ About the impact of bilingualism on the style of the LXX, see M. Janse, "Aspects of Bilingualism in the History of the Greek Language," in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text*, eds., J. N. Adams, M. Janse and S. Swain (Oxford, 2002), 332-46; 359-90. The impact of Hebrew as a source language on the calque translations of the Bible has been treated as a special case in Bar-Asher's typology. See Bar-Asher, *op. cit.*, 75-9.

Greek vernacular spoken by Alexandrine Jews, it does not fit Chaim Rabin's definition of what is a Jewish language.¹² According to this scholar, a Jewish language necessarily stays in a relation of diglossia toward Hebrew, the latter functioning as an upper language. Since in Alexandria, Hebrew had been replaced by Greek in all its sociolinguistic functions, the allegedly Judeo-Greek vernacular of Egypt was not integrated in a linguistic horizon that could have bestowed on it the characteristic of a Jewish language.

If we apply Chaim Rabin's sociolinguistic criterion to our issue, a real Judeo-Greek would be attested only if we find a situation where Jews spoke Greek at a vernacular level while preserving the traditional use of Hebrew for the purpose of prayer and study. Now, it seems that apart from the very specific origins of the Gospels, such a situation is hardly documented before the early Byzantine time.

In Roman Palestine, the knowledge of Greek was widespread among Jews of Galilee and Judea.¹³ However, its function is likely to have been vehicular rather than vernacular. Palestinian Jews used to resort to Greek to communicate either with Gentiles or with their diasporic correligionists. Strictly speaking, Jewish diglossia of Palestine at the end of the Second Temple period was bilingual rather than trilingual. Indeed, Hebrew functioned as an upper language and Aramaic as a lower language (except in Judea where a vernacular use of Hebrew seems to have been preserved until Bar Kokhba's rebellion at least).¹⁴ As for Greek, it was not organically integrated in this dynamic of coexistence of the upper language (Hebrew) with the lower language (Aramaic). Its use as an upper language was characteristic of either the Gentiles living in the country or the strongly Hellenized Jews (as the Sadducean aristocracy or the Herodian family). For the common people, Greek seems to have been restricted to the dimension of an impoverished vehicular. However, in the third and fourth century, the

¹² See above n. 8.

¹³ See J. Greenfield, "The Languages of Palestine, 200 B.C.E.–200 C.E.," in *Jewish Languages: Themes and Variations* (Proceedings of Regional Conferences of the Association for Jewish Studies Held at the University of Michigan and New York University in March–April 1975), ed., Herbert H. Paper (Cambridge, 1978), 149–50; H. Rosén, "Die Sprachsituation im römischen Palästina," in *Die Sprachen im römischen Reich der Kaiserzeit*, eds., G. Neumann and J. Untermamn (Köln, 1980), 215–40.

¹⁴ See C. Rabin, "The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew," *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, 4 (1958): 144–61; "Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century," *Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, II, (Assen, 1976), 1007–39.

Jewish population of Palestine seems to have had a better command of Greek than during the end of the Second Temple Period.¹⁵

A sociolinguistic constellation where Greek may be considered, if not a genuine Judeo-Greek, at least a vector of Jewish identity, is the context of Diaspora in the Western Mediterranean. Jews who settled in Italy, in Gaul, and in Spain preserved the use of Greek, as witnessed by the massive resort to this language in the funeral steles or in the catacombs. Since these Western Jews probably drew their origin from the Eastern Mediterranean Diaspora where Greek had long assumed all the sociolinguistic functions a language can fulfill in a monolingual context, they did not even pray in Hebrew. In the corpus of Jewish inscriptions in Western Europe published by David Noy,¹⁶ the earliest specimens are mostly written in Latin or in Greek with an occasional use of the word *shalom*. Full-fledged Hebrew inscriptions appear only in Late Antique inscriptions, probably as a result of the arrival of Palestinian Jews, more connected to Hebrew and Aramaic than their correligionists from the Jewish communities of the Eastern Mediterranean Diaspora. Some of the later inscriptions display an interesting way of spelling Greek in Hebrew letters.¹⁷

In the Diaspora of the Eastern Mediterranean (Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece), the resort to Greek would not linguistically distinguish the Hellenized Jews from their Gentile surroundings. Yet in the Western context where the lower language was Latin, the fact of using Greek as both a lower and an upper language constituted a linguistic specificity. An educated Roman may also have been fluent in Greek, but for him this language was tantamount to a snobbish sociolect. For Jews, on the other hand, Greek almost functioned as an ethnolect inasmuch as the mere fact of using Greek at all the levels of the sociolinguistic gamut was sufficient for categorizing them, if not as specifically Jewish, at least as Oriental. Indeed, apart from their specific religious identity, the Greek-speaking Jews of the Western Diaspora hardly differed linguistically and culturally from Greek Gentiles, Anatolians, or Hellenized Syrians, the three other ethnic groups of Eastern Mediterranean extraction that were represented in the cultural horizon of the

¹⁵ On the knowledge of Greek in Palestine at the time of the Tannaim and of the Amoraim, see S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1942), 1–28.

¹⁶ D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe* (Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁷ See for example the fifth-century inscription reproduced in *ibid.*, 98–9.

Western Mediterranean.¹⁸ Needless to say, this diffuse Oriental identity attached to the use of the Greek language in the West is not sufficient for viewing the Greek of the Jews living in the Latin-speaking provinces as a full-fledged Jewish language.

II. GREEK SPOKEN BY JEWS IN THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

In the Byzantine context, the Jews had both a vernacular command of Greek and a learned knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic (unlike the Hellenized Jews of Antiquity and Late Antiquity who were completely monolingual). The knowledge of Hebrew in the Byzantine Empire is attested to at least since 553, when a novel promulgated by Justinian tried to put limitations on the monopoly of Hebrew in Jewish worship and to prohibit the study of Mishna (δευτέρωσις).¹⁹ However, after the Arab conquest of Palestine and Syria in the second third of the seventh century, many Galilean Jews suffered from the economic recession provoked by the eradication of Palestinian vineyards by the Muslim conquerors. Many Jews of the former Byzantine provinces of the Near East chose to settle in other places of the Greek-speaking world: in Asia Minor, in the islands of the Aegean Sea, in mainland Greece, as well as in southern Italy (Apulia). From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, this transition to the West had two important consequences: first of all, it brought to the core of the Empire Jews who participated in the Hebrew/Aramaic culture of Palestinian Jewry; second, the recently emigrated Jews probably replaced their Aramaic vernacular with Greek. This was the first step toward a new diglossia with Hebrew and Aramaic occupying the status of the upper language and Demotic Greek assuming the functions of the vernacular. This situation sharply contrasts with the Palestinian situation where Greek was a language of prestige and Aramaic a language with vernacular functions.

This new sociolinguistic situation according to which Hebrew and Judeo-Aramaic were the upper languages and Greek the lower one may justify the view of the Demotic varieties of Greek used among Byzantine Jews as Judeo-Greek (according to Rabin's sociolinguistic

¹⁸ See D. Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers*, (London, 2000), 175.

¹⁹ See A. Sharf, "Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 48 (1955): 105 [= Sharf, *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium*, (Ramat Gan, 1995), 98]; *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade*, (London, 1971), 24–5.

criterion). Indeed, the relationship of the speaker to his own language considerably varies depending on which language functions as the *Dachsprache* of a given community. For a Christian Greek, the upper layer of the sociolinguistic hierarchy was constituted of both the Biblical Greek of the sacred texts and the learned Greek transmitted by Christian *Paideia*. For a Byzantine Jew, however, this upper layer was not Greek but Hebrew and Aramaic. In other words, the sociolinguistic difference between the Greek-Orthodox and the Jewish subjects of the Empire can be formulated as an opposition between a diglossia without bilingualism and a diglossia with bilingualism.²⁰

Let us now examine whether the texts from the Cairo Genizah edited by de Lange correspond from an internal viewpoint to the parameters that Bar-Asher formulated for the study of Jewish languages.²¹ Some of these texts display features that we may encounter in Jewish languages, namely the code switching between Hebrew and Greek²² and the code mixing of both languages within the same sentence.²³ However, not all the cases of code mixing found in this study can be considered specimens of Judeo-Greek. The just mentioned business letter, for instance, displays a situation that is diametrically opposite to what can be observed in Jewish languages where the matrix language is the non-Hebrew base and the added component is Hebrew or Aramaic.²⁴ Here, on the contrary, the grammatical armature of the sentence is Hebrew and the semantic words are borrowed from Greek, as in the following sentence:

אעשה אותם נטגנפשו קיאירימושדה מן האידגשיה

I should tan them (νὰ τὰ γνάψω)...(καὶ εἰρημώσαντα)²⁵ from the working (ἐργασία)²⁶

²⁰ On this category, see J. Fishman, "Bilingualism With and Without Diglossia; Diglossia With and Without Bilingualism," *Journal of Social Issues* 23/2 (1967): 29–38.

²¹ See above n. 9.

²² Especially in the first three fragments of the Passover Haggadah where the text of the Hebrew Haggadah is interspersed with instructions in Greek. See de Lange, *op. cit.*, 29–64.

²³ Especially in the business letter. See *ibid.*, 21–7.

²⁴ See Bar-Asher, *op. cit.*, 81–4.

²⁵ de Lange, *ibid.* understands this word as meaning "ruined." In the context of the sentence, the phrase καὶ εἰρημώσαντα may assume a concessive value. It could be translated as "even if they are ruined."

²⁶ See de Lange, *op. cit.*, 22–3. I have quoted de Lange's translation.

Since the redactor of the letter did not know the Hebrew words for such words as “tan,” “ruined,” or even “working,” he resorted to Greek. However, this intrasentential code switching did not break the continuity of the syntagm. The Greek element is syntactically integrated within the Hebrew sentence. Let us consider for instance the combination of the Hebrew article -ה with the substantive ἐργασία “working.” Even more striking is the creation of the hybrid verbal periphrase נטגנפשו העשה where the semantically void verbal form העשה “I shall do” is implemented by the final clause $\text{וְאֵלֶּיךָ יָבֹאוּ}$ “to tan them.”

Clearly, this insertion of Greek phrases in a minimalist Hebrew sentence is a solution *ad hoc*, the purpose of which was to compensate for the impossibility of expressing in Hebrew some trivial subjects taken from everyday life. In Jewish languages, on the contrary, the resort to Hebrew is supposed to compensate the lack of a vernacular word for the realia of Jewish life, especially as far as law and cult are concerned. Sometimes, it obeyed other purposes such as linguistic taboos or cryptolalic strategies. Whatever the pragmatic motivation of the code mixing might be, the occurrence of *Kulturwörter* borrowed from Hebrew or Aramaic within the framework of the Jewish language is regulated by consistent principles that contrast with the random way in which the Hebrew and the Greek of the business letter are intertwined.

Actually, the few attestations of what may be viewed as a genuine sample of Judeo-Greek are the instructions inserted in the Haggadah fragments. These instructions that obviously belong to a lower stratum of the Hellenic diglossia may be viewed as testimonies of Judeo-Greek, although they do not contain any Hebrew words but only specifically Jewish uses of words common to Gentiles and Jews. This reshaping of the semantic system of the language according to the particularities of the Jewish experience was not registered as a parameter in Bar-Asher’s article. And yet it is highly relevant for several Jewish languages. The most famous example of the shift of the signified which leaves untouched the signifier is the special value of Yiddish *yortseyt* “annual commemoration of the death” in comparison with its German counterpart *Jahreszeit* “season.” Such semantic specifications can be observed in the Greek instructions inserted in the Haggadah text samples edited by de Lange.²⁷ Let us take for example the word $\text{מרולין} = \mu\alpha\rho\upsilon\lambda\iota\nu$ which de Lange has interpreted as a designation

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 29–69.

for the *karpas*.²⁸ Although the original meaning of μαρούλιν is “lettuce,” it stands here for the vegetables usually designated by the term *karpas*, that is celery, parsley, or radish, not necessarily lettuce, this last ingredient being rather associated with *maror* “the bitter herbs.” Now, in the Byzantine Haggadah, the *maror* is called פִּיקְרִידִין = πικρίδιν.²⁹ Thus, we witness here a remodeling of the respective semantic fields of μαρούλιν and πικρίδιν. Indeed, μαρούλιν has been severed from its usual reference to lettuce to become the conventional equivalent of *karpas*, which is signified with plenty of potential references, depending on the specific tradition. As for πικρίδιν, its etymological tie with πικρός “bitter”³⁰ made it able to function as a correct equivalent of *maror* on the level of the signifier, although from the point of view of reference, this ingredient is mostly identified with lettuce, that is μαρούλιν in Greek. This reinterpretation of the semantic distribution of μαρούλιν and πικρίδιν may be considered a typically Judeo-Greek feature.

Likewise, it is remarkable that the unleavened bread has not been designated neither by the Hebrew term *matzah* nor by the appellation ἄζυμα of Biblical Greek, but by the Demotic word πιττάριον “little pita bread.”³¹ The translation of *matzah* by a word that Gentiles used to designate leavened bread has some parallels in other Jewish languages. In the Provençal of the Jews of Comtat Venaissin, for instance, the *matzah* was called *coudolo*, a common designation for a kind of biscuit. And in the French substandard of North African Jews, *galette* “round biscuit” is still occasionally used as an equivalent of *matzah*.

Lastly, the semantic shift resulting from the adaptation of the Greek language to the Jewish experience also involves the verb εὐχαριστῶ and the corresponding noun εὐχαριστία that are to be taken as the equivalents of respectively בָּרַךְ “to bless” and בְּרַכָּה “blessing” instead of the expected words εὐλογῶ and εὐλογία.³²

²⁸ See *ibid.*, 30. The equivalence *karpas* = μαρούλιν is explicitly stated in the fourth of the four Haggadah fragments. See *ibid.*, 66–7.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, 50–3.

³⁰ Let us bear in mind that from an etymological perspective, μαρούλιν < μαρούλιον is also connected with the semanteme “bitterness,” since it is the Greek avatar of Latin *amarulus*, itself a diminutive of *amarus* “bitter.” See Λεξικό της νεοελληνικής κοινής (Thessalonica: Ινστιτούτο νεοελληνικής σπουδής, 1998), 823b. However, it is not likely that this etymological value of μαρούλιν was perceived synchronically.

³¹ See *ibid.*, 30–1; 50–3. The word πιττάριον is a diminutive of πίττα (Modern Greek πίττα “pita bread”).

³² See *ibid.*, 52–3; 62–3.

As for the medieval translations into Greek produced in a Jewish context,³³ they cannot be considered a real example of Judeo-Greek because the pressure of the source-text on the target-text is sufficient for explaining the particularity of the language. Moreover, the biblical translations produced in a Greek-speaking Jewish context are highly heterogeneous from one translation to the other,³⁴ and sometimes within the same translation. The impact of the already extant versions of the Bible (LXX, Aquila, Symmachus) are responsible for the interference of an archaizing level of language on Demotic, which is usually the matrix language of the translation. Since each translation is a special mix between the indebtedness to the previous translation and innovation as well as between the high and low levels of the Greek diglossia, it is difficult to prove that there was a standard blend of Judeo-Greek used for the rendering of Biblical or Mishnaic Hebrew. The material gathered by de Lange is far from offering a uniform picture.

Thus, the situation that we are facing here is completely different from that prevailing in the Judeo-Spanish speaking world, where a special language crystallized for the special purpose of translating Hebrew texts. If there was ever a Judeo-Greek language in the Byzantine cultural horizon, it was mostly restricted to the dimension of vernacular, only fragmentary parts of which have been committed to writing.

III. THE GREEK OF THE ROMANIOT JEWS

From the end of the fifteenth century, a continuous wave of Western Mediterranean Jews reached the Ottoman Empire where they met the local Greek-speaking communities. The cultural clash provoked by the encounter between the Romaniots and the Westerners was mostly resolved by the assimilation to the standards of the newcomers, according to a process attested in other places of the Jewish world and

³³ See de Lange, *op. cit.*, 71–305.

³⁴ Sometimes, the translation belongs to a very high level of Greek. This is the case of the translation conserved in the MS. Marcianus Græcus VII (Græcus Venetus), if we may consider it as a Jewish translation. On this text and its relationship with the Jewish translations of the Bible into Greek, see my article “La place du Venetus Græcus dans l’histoire des traductions grecques de la Bible,” *Revue de philologie*, LXXVIII, 2 (1999): 155–74.

in other periods of Jewish history.³⁵ However, there are some traces of a Romaniot substrate in the Judeo-Spanish spoken by Sephardic Jews in Greece as well as in Turkey. Let us mention, for instance, the use of *Ayifto* "Egypt" < Αἴγυπτος instead of *Mitzraim* in the Passover Haggadah. This pronunciation displays an interesting shift from the first to the last syllable, as well as a typically Demotic spirantization of [g] in [j] before a front vowel and of implosive [p] in [f].³⁶ On the other hand, the reinterpretation of the initial [e-] as [a-] should be understood as an inner Judeo-Spanish phenomenon.

Yet some areas resisted the overwhelming influence of both the Sephardic and Italiot Jews. These are the Romaniot communities of Epirus, Thessaly, Chalcis, and Crete. However, the vernacular traditionally spoken by these Jews hardly differed from the Demotic Greek used in the non-Jewish surroundings.³⁷ In this respect, Romaniot Jews are very like their ancestors, the Byzantine Jews, whose only linguistic specificity consisted in using Hebrew as an upper language and in reshaping occasionally the semantic fields of the Greek words.

Due to the overtly vernacular character of the Greek spoken by Romaniots, very few testimonies of their speech have been written down. Thus, the appraisal of the specificity of the particular blend of Greek should be analyzed in sociologic terms. The sporadic presence of a few Hebrew lexical items (mainly realia related to the Jewish cult or to specifically Jewish traditions) cannot by itself constitute a sufficient criterion for considering the language spoken by Romaniot Jew a specifically Jewish language. However, if we apply the tools of sociolinguistics, it appears that the Greek-speaking Jews constituted an interesting case of the preservation of the Greek language, even in such surroundings where Greek was not the official language. Before the annexation of Thessaly in 1881 and of Epirus in 1912–13, the Greek-speaking Jews of that area used to live in the multicultural context

³⁵ Cf. for instance, the assimilation of the Slavic-speaking non-Ashkenazic Jews to the standards of the Ashkenazim who immigrated to Poland and Lithuania from the end of the thirteenth century.

³⁶ About this last evolution, see A. Thumb, *Handbuch der neugriechischen Volsprache*, 2nd edn., (Strasbourg, 1910), 12 [§14].

³⁷ On the lack of any Jewish specificity in the Romaniot-spoken Greek, see the sound remarks of G. Drettas, "Propos sur la judéité grecophone," in *Vena Hebraica in Judæorum Linguis*, (Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Hebrew and Aramaic Elements in Jewish Languages (Milan, October 23–26, 1995), eds., S. Morag, M. Bar-Asher, M. Mayer-Modena, (Milan, 1999), 277–8.

of the Ottoman Empire.³⁸ Under such conditions, they were part of the same *millet* to which Spanish-speaking Sephardis belonged. However, they did not share the same language with their correligionists. It should be stressed that in an Ottoman context, the Judeo-Spanish language was so intimately associated with the Jewish ethnic-religious identity that the Turks called this language *yahudice* “Jewish.” Thus, the Jews who did not speak *yahudice* but rather *rumca* “Greek” were linguistically closer to the members of the Greek-Orthodox *millet* than to most of the members of their own *millet*. If we take into account that in Turkish *rum* “Greek” was synonymous with “Christian,” it may sound quite strange that the Romaniot Jews spoke “Christian” (*rumca*) and not “Jewish” (*yahudice*), the latter term being reserved for Judeo-Spanish. This paradox is all the more striking in that some of the Romaniot Jews of Epirus lived in the Albanian town of Valona (Vlorë), in an area that was never recuperated by the Greek State. In a certain sense, these Greek-speaking Jews contributed to the expansion of Hellenism outside of Greece, as did those of the Romaniots who emigrated to Israel or to the United States.

After the integration of Northern Greece (Epirus, Macedonia, Thracia) to the Kingdom of Greece, the Greek-speaking Romaniots felt part of the nation, as shown by two indices. First, the migration trend that brought a lot of Epirot Jews to Athens between the two world wars. Second, the tendency of many Romaniot men (especially those from Chalcis) to serve as career officers in the Greek army.

From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, the vernacular spoken by Romaniot Jews was a dialectal blend of Demotic Greek. However, it did not continue a specific blend of Judeo-Greek. It was just an integral part of the dialectal context of some provinces like Epirus, Thessaly, Euboea, or Crete. With the recession of the dialects and the progress of the Neohellenic Koine,³⁹ even this local specificity displayed by the Romaniot Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors was given up in favor of an adaptation to the standards of Common Greek. This situation differed from that of the Sephardis whose usual language was Judeo-Spanish. The fact that the Romaniots used Greek as a vernacular created a continuum from the basilect up to the acrolect.

³⁸ On the sociolinguistic context of Epirus under Ottoman rule, see Drettas, *op. cit.*, 275–6.

³⁹ On this concept, see G. Babiniotis, *Νεοελληνική κοινή* (Athens, 1979).

On the other hand, the Sephardis had to learn Greek at a relatively late stage of their history. Thus, their command of Greek was acrolectal, as far as this term is relevant when speaking of Greek diglossia.⁴⁰ However, since the Greek literary language is based on Demotic, one can definitely have an acrolectal command of Demotic Greek. The point is that the Greek of the Salonician Jews was not influenced by a specific dialectal color, as was the vernacular of the Romaniots. It was basically the Greek acquired outside the framework of the family and the community. As such, it was colorless and conformed more to higher norm(s) of Greek, either purist or elegant Demotic. Whenever I had the opportunity to meet Sephardic Jews stemming from Salonica, I was deeply impressed by the quality of their Greek, which was all the more amazing in that most of them had left Greece a long time ago. These elderly people explained me that in their generation, that is the generation born in the late twenties-early thirties, there was a strong motivation to adopt the higher standards of Hellenism. Finally, it is noteworthy that there was no specific dialectal variety in Salonica, where the Greek population was only a minority until 1912–13. It is the massive arrival of Asia Minor Greeks in 1923 that bestowed a specific dialectal identity on the Greek spoken in the Jerusalem of the Balkans. Of course, this basilectal sub-standard was not the most attractive one for a young Sephardi eager to be culturally integrated to Greek society.

IV. CONCLUSION

According to the criteria mentioned above, it seems that the best method to use in addressing the question of Judeo-Greek is a differential one. From Antiquity to the Byzantine era and from the Byzantine era to the modern period, Greek-speaking Jews may have developed a specific blend of Greek, the Jewish color of which was mainly due to the coexistence with Hebrew within traditional Jewish diglossia. It seems that there was never such a thing as the crystallization of a

⁴⁰ The presence of Hebrew in the sociolinguistic landscape of both Romaniots and Sephardis prevents speaking of a contrast between “bilingualism without diglossia” and “bilingualism with diglossia.” On this distinction, see Fishman, *op. cit.* However, the linguistic horizon of the Sephardis was more variegated than that of the Romaniots.

specific Judeo-Greek language able to be handed down to posterity. Thus, if we should consider the various stages of Judeo-Greek in the long term, the continuity that one can perceive between Jewish texts written in Koine (such as the Gospels for instance) and later samples of Judeo-Greek has to be ascribed to the general development of the Greek language. The bottom line of this survey is a rather paradoxical one. Indeed, the Greek of the Gospels exerted a huge impact on the development of Greek as a whole. Now, the text of the four Evangelists is perhaps one of the rare examples, if not of a genuinely Judeo-Greek text, at least of a blend of language deeply influenced by another Jewish language, namely Judeo-Aramaic. Therefore, the Demotic Greek that crystallized during the Byzantine time may be considered the indirect and remote result of the Aramaization of Koine.

To conclude, it seems that the only genuine blend of Judeo-Greek was the medieval variety of Greek, some fragments of which appear in the material from the Genizah. Only there can we perceive some traces of a restructuring of the semantic fields, a phenomenon that is characteristic of the crystallization of Jewish languages. However, this specific blend of Byzantine Judeo-Greek did not continue until modern times. Furthermore, some other periods of Byzantine history or some other places in the Empire may have given birth to other varieties of Judeo-Greek, irreducible to the specific specimens found in the Genizah. Thus, one has to conceive the various attestations of Greek spoken by Jews as a multifocal phenomenon that did not necessarily lead to the crystallization of a specific linguistic system that might be considered "Judeo-Greek."

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH ART: JEWISH ART AS A MINORITY CULTURE IN BYZANTIUM

Rina Talgam

This paper will focus on the role played by visual art in constructing the ethnic and religious identity of the Jewish community as a minority group in Byzantium. A cultural identity, in the full sense of the term, is not only how a person sees himself, but also how he perceives himself in relation to others. Jewish art took into account the contact with others in fostering the internal dialogue among members of the community, and therefore in order to understand its development in the Byzantine period, it should be examined against the background of contemporary Christian art with which it had a profound and multi-dimensional dialogue.

The complex interrelationship between Jewish and Christian art in early Byzantium was dynamic and under constant renegotiation. The Jewish response to Christian art was ambivalent and not always consistent. One can point to processes of assimilation to the predominant architecture and art, but one also takes note of the segregation from it. The interactions between Jewish art and Christian art were of a dialectic nature and affected both sides. At times the relationships bore the character of a polemic, either overt or covert, but there were cases when they bore testimony to a similar mentality and a large shared inventory of images.

In characterizing these mutual relationships, we must employ a varied vocabulary that ranges, on the one hand, from acculturation and assimilation, through the borrowing and adaptation of ideas, models, and motifs taken from the majority culture to differentiation reflected through the use of an exclusive set of symbols and the omission of others, on the other. In examining the visual dialogues between Judaism and Christianity, we must pay careful attention to the multiple voices in each of them.

The interaction between Judaism and Christianity in early Byzantine art has become an issue of enormous scholarly interest in recent years. The basis for this approach to Jewish art was laid in Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert Kessler's joint research of the paintings in the synagogue

at Dura-Europos, where one can discern a polemical dialogue with Christian art and pagan cults,¹ and is also evident in Elisheva Revel-Neher's studies.² Zeev Weiss's majestic volume on the Sepphoris synagogue³ and Steven Fine's thought-provoking book, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World*, have also made important contributions to the topic.⁴

The locus of my study is Jewish art of the early Byzantine period in Palaestina and Arabia, which is better represented in archaeological discoveries than that of the Diaspora. By contrast to the wealth of information concerning Jewish art from the fourth to eighth centuries, we know almost nothing, if anything at all, about Jewish art in Middle and Late Byzantium.

It is not my intention to provide a full and comprehensive survey of the artistic finds, as they have already been dealt with in various general studies.⁵ I wish to draw attention to some methodological aspects and to focus on a number of principal subjects which, in my view, heighten our understanding of the dialogue between Jewish and Christian art in Byzantium. The subjects under discussion deal with the changes of attitudes toward figurative art, the difficulties arising from the fact that the two rival faiths share a common sacred text, their different sentiments regarding the Temple in Jerusalem, and their approach to the classic pagan artistic legacy. Finally, I will relate to the subject of exclusive symbols.

This paper relates to the works of art as historical documents. A careful examination of them and their inclusion in the scientific discourse makes a richer perception of the past possible. Sometimes the art confirms the textual evidence and at others times contradicts it. This lack of agreement obliges us to assume that the historical picture

¹ K. Weitzmann and H. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art* (Washington D.C., 1990).

² E. Revel-Neher, *L'arche d'alliance dans l'art juif et chrétien du second au dixième siècles* (Paris, 1984).

³ Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue: Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* (Jerusalem, 2005).

⁴ S. Fine, *Art & Judaism in the Greco—Roman World; Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge, 2005).

⁵ R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden, 1988); idem, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora* (Leiden, 1998); S. Fine, ed., *Sacred Realm; The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* (Oxford, 1996); L. Levine, ed., *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1981); idem, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven, 2005).

is more complex than we had thought. The research issues confronting an art historian do not differ from those facing a historian analyzing a text:

When was the work created? What is its significance? In what lies its uniqueness and importance? Who was the artist/author who created it? Where did he receive his training/education? Whence did he take his models/ideas? Did he understand them? If he changed something, what did he change? If he invented something, how did he invent it? Who was the patron? What was his social status, occupation, level of education? What was his motivation? Who looked at / read his creation? When? Under what circumstances? The main differences in the decipherment procedure stem from the fact that while historical-philological research can remain within the limits of the textual medium, an art historian who wishes to understand the significance of visual art in the historical context in which it functioned, is obliged to bridge the gap between the visual and textual media. It is impossible to understand a work of art in isolation from the historical context, and therefore the reading of texts is essential. We have no other way of beginning the search for significance.

My impression is that the procedure of decipherment often strengthens the privileged status of the text in relation to the visual creation and one must be wary of this. One should take into account the possibility that the text was influenced by visual art.⁶ Thus, for example, the figurative image of the sun as a rider in his chariot appears at least twice in midrashim of the early Byzantine period. In Numbers Rabbah 12: 4 it is written: “‘The chariot of it purple’. Chariot signifies the sun, which is set on high and rides in a chariot, lighting up the world. This accords with the text: ‘The sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber’... As a result of the potency of the sun the rain comes down, and as a result of the potency of the sun the earth yields fruit.” Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah 16 states: “The Holy One Blessed-Be-He showed Abraham all of the Zodiac (*mazalot*) surrounding his Divine Presence (*shekhinah*);... and said: just as the zodiac surrounds Me, with My glory in the center, so shall your descendants multiply and camp under many flags, with My *shekhinah* in the center.” When figurative metaphors like those I have just mentioned appear in

⁶ A. Wharton, “Good and Bad Images from the Synagogue of Dura Europos: Contexts, Subtexts, Intertexts,” *Art History* 17.1 (1994): 1–25.

literature, one must seriously examine the possibility that visual art is the source and not the opposite.

The connection between text and visual imagery is not a simple one, and therefore I have chosen to examine some methodological aspects relating to it and to focus on their reflection in early Byzantine Christian and Jewish art.

I. SOME METHODOLOGICAL COMMENTS ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN VISUAL REPRESENTATION AND TEXT: JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN ART IN BYZANTIUM AS A TEST CASE

The methodological aspects relating to the connection between visual images and texts in the art of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages have been discussed by various scholars.⁷ I wish to offer a number of comments concerning visual images and texts to be discussed below.

One can point to several levels of linkage. Of these, I enumerate the two principal ones.

A. Direct Connection between Text and Visual Images

The closest connection apparently exists when art forms an illustration of the text. However, even in this case one must pay attention, as even when there is a direct connection, the visual presentation will always have a measure of interpretation. For example, despite the detailed description of the Ark of the Covenant in the Bible, one cannot obtain from it an unambiguous picture of its form. An artist was often obliged to fill the gap left by the author, and he could have added details or in other cases left some out. In the depiction of the Binding of Isaac at Dura-Europos and Beth Alpha (Fig. 1, color) for example, an arm extending from heaven has replaced the voice of God's angel. Since it was impossible to depict the angel's voice visually, the artist borrowed another common metaphor for Divine intervention from biblical language, which could be translated into a visual image. This motif first appeared in Jewish art in the third century and then penetrated into Christian and imperial art. The designer of the Sepphoris

⁷ J. Small, *The Parallel Worlds of Classical Art and Text* (Cambridge, 2003); R. Brilliant, *Visual Narratives; Storytelling in Etruscan and Roman Art* (Ithaca, 1984); H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park, 1987); E. Sears and T. Thomas, *Reading Medieval Art* (Michigan, 2002).

mosaic (Fig. 2, color), unlike his colleagues in Dura-Europos and Beth Alpha, either because he thought that a verbal metaphor should not be translated into a visual image in a religion in which God is invisible, or because he felt uneasy about the fact that the selfsame image symbolized God the Father and the ram, the Son of God, in Christian art, decided to dispense with it and alluded to the Divine presence by means of the removal of footwear, a detail not mentioned in the biblical text and the Midrashic literature on the Binding of Isaac.⁸ Moreover, artists base their repertoire of images on a visual tradition, which sometimes exists as an autonomous entity from the textual heritage.

Thus, for example, nothing in the biblical text explains the depiction of King David enchanting the animals with his music, as shown in one of the mosaic panels in the synagogue at Gaza (Fig. 3, color).⁹ This figure of David, which shows great similarity to the rendition of Orpheus, is a transformation of this mythological figure into that of David. This connection was made because the attributes of the Thracian poet, whose music enchanted even beasts of prey and who was conceived as a symbol of heavenly peace, matched those of David the musician, author of the Psalms, the heaven-inspired poet whose music is a promise of redemption. In this context, Friedman comments that the association of Orpheus and David “would have been quickly apparent to persons accustomed to thinking typologically.”¹⁰ Friedman also directs our attention to Christian texts in which the wonderful music of Orpheus is compared to that of David, which is superior to it.¹¹ As mentioned by Barasch, such a direct comparison is unknown from Jewish sources of Late Antiquity.¹²

⁸ Z. Weiss, “The Sepphoris Synagogue Mosaic and the Role of Talmudic Literature in Its Iconographical Study,” in *From Dura Europos to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement 40, eds., L. Levine and Z. Weiss (Portsmouth, 2000), 15–30.

⁹ M. Barasch, “The David Mosaic at Gaza,” *Eretz-Israel* 10 (1971): 94–9; idem, “The David Mosaic of Gaza,” *Assaph; Studies in Art History*, 1 (1980): 1–33; P. Finney, “Orpheus-David: A Connection in Iconography between Greco-Roman Judaism and Early Christianity,” *JJA* 5 (1978): 6–15.

¹⁰ J. Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1970), 148. Friedman 1970, 149ff.

¹² Barasch 1980, 15. This is not the first depiction of David-Orpheus in Jewish art. Above the niche of the Holy Ark in the first cycle of paintings executed in the synagogue of Dura-Europos, David-Orpheus is depicted wearing Persian garb and a Phrygian cap; he enchants the animals with his music. Another portrayal is in the Jewish cemetery of the Vigna Randanini in Rome.

The great innovations in the way David is depicted as Orpheus in the Gaza synagogue are the royal elements of his figure, particularly the crown. In the depictions of Orpheus from Late Antiquity, he could be sitting on a seat but a crown is never present. Orpheus was never imagined as a king, and the majestic character of the David-Orpheus from Gaza should be understood not only against the background of David, king of Israel, but also against the typological identification of David with the Byzantine emperor. This connection was initially made in the time of Constantine, who was known as "the new David."¹³ However, the known visual examples of this parallelism are from the period of Justinian onwards, such as, for example, the mosaic at the base of the apse-conch in the church of the Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai.¹⁴

Sometimes we are likely to find a depiction that includes elements contradicting the text. An example of this are the depiction of the Binding of Isaac at Sepphoris (Fig. 2, color) and Beth Alpha (Fig. 1, color), in which, in contrast to the biblical text, the ram is not caught by his horns in a thicket but is tethered to a tree. We must be conscious of the possibility that artists incorporated in their creations ideas taken from various texts, and that they were inspired not only by those texts but also by other works of art in addition to their reference to the text. Moreover, especially with regard to ancient societies, we must also take into account the knowledge that was transmitted orally, as well as the possibility that an oral tradition could have preceded the written text. From this it follows that a Midrash reflected in a visual presentation could testify to its precedence in relation to the time of compilation of the collection of Midrashim in which it was included.

Another matter to be taken into account is that an illustration accompanying a text would have significance beyond the text itself. Thus, for example, the illustration to Psalms (Septuagint) 51:21, "then the bulls will be sacrificed on Your altar," when it appears at the front of the altar in a sixth-century Christian chapel, takes on a liturgical significance which is not found in the original text.¹⁵

¹³ G. Noga-Banai, 'David's Plates' from Lambousa hoard, Cyprus (MA thesis, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1995), 45 (Hebrew).

¹⁴ K. Weitzmann, "Introduction to the Mosaics and Monumental Paintings," in *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, The Church and Fortress of Justinian*, G. H. Forsyth and K. Weitzmann with I. Ševčenko and F. Anderegg (Ann Arbor, 1973), pl. CIII, CXIX B.

¹⁵ I shall deal with this subject more explicitly later on.

In the category of texts which have a direct connection with visual art, the rhetoric genre termed *ekphrasis* is also included. The *ekphrasis* had its beginning in ancient Greece and continued to be part of the classic education of the learned in the Byzantine period.¹⁶ The great innovations of the Byzantine period were *ekphraseis* of sacred architecture alongside the continued use of this genre in relation to secular art. As mentioned by James, Webb, and Elsner, the *ekphrasis* is not a simple description of a work of art, but one intended to arouse among the audience a reaction towards it.¹⁷ The *ekphrasis* was not adopted by the Jews of Byzantium and one should ask whether there were other texts that filled the gap and gave rise to the correct attitude toward the subjects appearing in synagogue art. It is possible that a small group of *piyyutim* and homilies recited in the synagogues partially fulfilled this function, although the typical features of the *piyyutim* are not similar to *ekphrasis* but to Christian hymns, as is well illustrated by a comparison with the poetry of Romanos.

The number of Jewish texts that directly reference art is small and also less informative in comparison to Christian literature. From various texts of the church fathers one learns, *inter alia*, about the important role played by art in illustrating the typological thought that the image or scene that is depicted from the Old Testament is a prefiguration and suggests another that exceeds it in importance.¹⁸ This was the great innovation of Christian art from the third century, with which Jewish art had to compete. The few Jewish texts at our disposal deal with laws governing idolatry. In the relevant sources, the silence of the Sages on all matters relating to art has helped to foster the modern myth about the artless Jew.¹⁹ How great was the surprise of scholars in the 1920s when, for the first time, synagogues decorated with

¹⁶ D. Fowler, "Narrate and Describe: The Problem of Ekphrasis," *Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991): 25–35; D. Carrier, "Ekphrasis and Interpretation: Two Modes of Art History Writing," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 27 (1987): 20–31; L. James and R. Webb, "To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places: Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium," *Art History* 14 (1991): 1–17.

¹⁷ James and Webb, "Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium," 1–17; R. Webb, "The Aesthetics of Sacred Space: Narrative, Metaphor, and Motion in *Ekphraseis* of Church Buildings," *DOP* 53 (1999): 59–74; J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge, 1995), 21–48.

¹⁸ H. Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity," *Kairos* 32–33 (1990–1991): 53–77.

¹⁹ K. Bland, *The Artless Jew; Medieval and Modern Affirmation and Denials of the Visual* (Princeton, 2001).

mosaics featuring the sacred utensils, the zodiac, and biblical figures were discovered.

B. *Indirect Connection between Text and Visual Imagery*

Very often the scholar deciphering a work of art is required to rely on texts, which have no direct connection with it. This leads to a fear that scholars seeking to interpret a work of art will randomly choose texts in order to support the interpretation they wish to propose. However, this does not have to be the case. It is desirable that we look for texts that were written in the same vicinity and at the same time as the visual representation, so one can say that they reflect a similar mentality and were created in the same cultural climate. Thus, for example, I am not of the opinion that the *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* literature is needed to explain the appearance of the zodiac in a synagogue, the location and main dedicatory inscription of which indicate that it belonged to circles of the Nasi.²⁰ I find it difficult to understand why esoteric knowledge of this kind would occupy the central place on the floor of a synagogue whose congregants included Hillel II.

Our meager knowledge of the standing of the Sages and the extent of their influence on Jewish society and synagogue art after the completion of the Jerusalem Talmud has led a number of scholars to doubt the relevance of these sources for an understanding of the meaning of the decorations.²¹ The synagogue at Rehob, in which a long Halakhic inscription is cited, suggests the opposite. Others suggest that we should regard the synagogues at Sepphoris and Susiya, in which emphasis is given to the offering of sacrifices in the Tabernacle and Temple, as belonging to the priestly class, despite the fact that the dedicatory inscriptions discovered in them mention a priest together with

²⁰ Magness holds the view that Helios was also meant to represent Metatron, the divine super-angel; J. Magness, "Heaven on Earth: Helios and the Zodiac Cycle in Ancient Palestinian Synagogues," *DOP* 59 (2007): 1–52.

²¹ L. Levine, "The Sages and the Synagogue in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of the Galilee," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. idem (New York, 1992), 201–22; S. Schwartz, "On the Program and Reception of the Synagogue Mosaics," in *From Dura Europos to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* 40, eds., L. Levine and Z. Weiss (Portsmouth, 2000), 165–182; idem, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, 2001), 245–59.

people who are not priests.²² Moreover, their iconographic scheme is indistinguishable in its other components from that of the synagogues of Beth Alpha and Na'aran.

In my opinion, any dichotomous presentation of the priestly agenda versus that of the Sages is incorrect.²³ As indicated by Elior, over the generations the synagogue became a communal cultural-religious-social establishment, which combined various traditions from the world of the Sages and that of the priests.²⁴

The mosaic in the Sepphoris synagogue, characterized by a complex iconographic scheme which was meant to educate, bears testimony to the involvement of intellectuals in the planning stage. A stand that severs synagogue decoration like that at Sepphoris from the world of the Sages leads to the unacceptable claim about the existence of an intellectual elite, which formed a leadership alternative to that of the Sages.

Following the same logic, I suggest that we take into consideration all the literature of the synagogue in Late Antiquity, while studying its decoration. This literature was varied and included prayer, public sermons (*derashot*), Aramaic translation (*targum*), and liturgical poetry (*piyyut*). In response to Fine, who gives priority to liturgical poetry, I would like to say that liturgical texts are indeed relevant to the understanding of the decoration, but I do not comprehend why there is a need to exclude other sources.²⁵ The synagogue served not only as a house of prayer but also as a house of study and therefore the *midrash* and *targum* are also relevant to understanding it.

The artist in antiquity and his patrons, like the modern artist, gave visual expression to his sociocultural experience. Therefore we, as

²² J. Yahalom, "The Sepphoris Synagogue Mosaic and its Story," in *From Dura Europos to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement 40, eds., L. Levine and Z. Weiss (Portsmouth, 2000), 83–92; O. Irshai, "The Priesthood in Jewish Society in Late Antiquity," in *Continuity and Renewal, Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem, 2004), 67–106 (Hebrew).

²³ L. Levine, "Contextualizing Jewish Art: The Synagogues at Hammat Tiberias and Sepphoris," in *Jewish Culture and Society in the Christian Roman Empire*, eds., R. Kalmin and S. Schwartz (Leuven, 2003), 91–131.

²⁴ R. Elior, "Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature: Its Relation to the Temple, the Heavenly Temple, and the 'Diminished Temple,'" *Continuity and Renewal Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed. L. Levine (Jerusalem, 2004), 117–8 (Hebrew).

²⁵ Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 188.

scholars, must try to understand the art against the background of the entire cultural environment in which the artist worked. The *Targumim*, the homiletic interpretations, the prayers, and the *piyyutim* are relevant not only when they directly explain one or another detail in the depiction. This literature reflects the way the people of that time interpreted canonical texts, and teaches us about the spirit of the times and the variety of approaches adopted by those who gave literary expression to the liturgy in the synagogue, to which the creators of the mosaic gave visual expression.

II. CHANGES WITH REGARD TO FIGURATIVE ART IN JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SOCIETY IN BYZANTIUM

In contrast to the strict interpretation of the Second Commandment in the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods that led to an almost complete avoidance of animal and human representations, from the third century on the attitude became much more liberal. The different reactions to the threat posed by the art of the majority culture, which is reflected by raising high partitions and limiting the areas in which it was possible to point to exchange of ideas in the Second Temple period as opposed to the expansion of the dynamic area in the early Byzantine period, call for an explanation.

What changed the Jewish attitude toward art? Yaron Eliav claims that what helped the Sages to adopt a less conservative approach toward mythological statuary already in the second century is that they accepted the distinction in contemporary Greco-Roman thought between an idol and a statue.²⁶ I would like to suggest that this distinction became more pronounced in the early Byzantine period and facilitated the Jews' use of images taken from classical art, even within the synagogue. As indicated by Lea Stirling, the anti-pagan legislation of Theodosius stresses not statuary, but worship.²⁷ The law clearly differentiates between decorative and religious functions, with sacrifice as a way to identify a religious function. Statuary itself in a private or

²⁶ Y. Eliav, "Viewing the Sculptural Environment: Shaping the Second Commandment," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture* Vol. 3, ed., P. Schäfer (Tübingen, 2003), 411–33.

²⁷ L. Stirling, *The Learned Collector; Mythological Statuettes and Classical Taste in Late Antique Gaul* (Ann Arbor, 2005), 156–63.

secular context is not forbidden, just the worship of statuary is banned. The ecclesiastical and hagiographic sources of the fourth century and later report the obliteration of statues, but nearly all these accounts focus on statuary in sanctuaries.

The common scholarly approach maintains that the liberal interpretation of the Second Commandment at that time should be understood in light of the weakening power of paganism and a lapse in the danger of idolatry. This is the position taken by Ephraim Urbach and Nahman Avigad, whose basic studies of the rabbinic laws governing idolatry are examined against the background of the archaeological finds from the Roman period.²⁸

This conception emphasizes two sides of the triangle and largely ignores the third—the recognition of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. The waning of paganism indeed allowed for the more extensive use of figures drawn from Greco-Roman art, but the main reason for the change was the need to contend with the rising power of Christianity, which used art as an efficient tool for establishing its faith. The triumph of Christianity changed the scene radically. Up to the time of Constantine, the Roman Empire was a pluralist world, composed of many cults and religions. As indicated by Athanassiadi, the categories ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ were alien to the pagan intellectuals of Late Antiquity. In this climate of toleration of others creeds, Judaism stood apart in claiming an exclusive knowledge of God. As an offshoot of Judaism, Christianity also thought in terms of one true faith and one sole path, but at the same time conducted missionary activity to save humanity from spiritual ignorance. All other ways were considered the wrong kind of choice.²⁹ This intolerant way of thinking, common to Judaism and Christianity, increased the tension between them. Moreover, the colonization of the Holy Land under Christian rule was not limited to the control of the economical and physical resources, but also transformed this region from a Jewish Promised Land into a Christian Holy Land. Furthermore, as early as the third century, Christian art employed biblical stories to

²⁸ E. Urbach, “The Rabbinical Laws of Idolatry in the Second and Third Centuries in Light of Archaeological and Historical Facts,” *Eretz Israel* 5 (1958): 189–205 (Hebrew); N. Avigad, *Beth She’arim* 3 (Jerusalem, 1972): 201–8 (Hebrew).

²⁹ P. Athanassiadi, “The Creation of Orthodoxy in Neoplatonism,” in *Philosophy and Power in the Graeco-Roman World, Essays in Honour of Miriam Griffin*, eds., G. Clark and T. Rajak (Oxford, 2002), 271–3.

assimilate the Christian typology, and from the early fourth century on the Christian basilica was regarded symbolically as the successor of Solomon's Temple. The presentation of Jewish history as subordinate to and completed by the Incarnation did not allow the Jews to sit idle and called for a response.

One of the questions that need to be asked is: Who led this move in Jewish society? According to the view widely expressed in research literature, the impulse to create figurative art on the floors of synagogues came from the "common people," and the role of the Sages was confined to not having tried to prevent it. In other words, the Sages adopted a passive stance and certainly did not play a leading role in this move.³⁰ The approach of these scholars is based, *inter alia*, on the way in which they explain the two statements in tractate *Avodah Zarah* 42b of the Jerusalem Talmud: The first declares that "in the days of Rabbi Johanan [third century] they began to paint on walls, and he did not prevent them." The second proclaims that "in the days of R. Abun [first half of the fourth century] they began to make designs on mosaics, and he did not prevent them."³¹ I wish to propose a slightly different reading of the above-mentioned Talmudic text. In my view, the main thing to be learned from this evidence is that Jews felt the need to give visual expression to their cultural identity, and that the Sages understood that the historical circumstances at that time justified a change in the Halakha, as well as their recognition of the effective didactic values of visual depictions. At this stage, the Sages showed a passive attitude, but they were not cut off from what was happening and moreover did not cede their controlling influence.³² Just as Rabbi Johanan and Rabbi Abun represented a tolerant approach among the Sages with regard to synagogue art, there were possibly others who

³⁰ L. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1989), 180; S. Stern, "Figurative Art and the Halakha in the Mishnaic—Talmudic Period", *Zion* 61 (1996): 397–420 (Hebrew).

³¹ This passage as well as others have been recently re-explored by Fine in his discussion of the attitudes towards art in rabbinic literature; Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 97–123; see esp. 98–9, 120–2.

³² A nuanced and balanced reappraisal of the archaeological and literary sources in regard to the influence of the rabbis within Jewish society in general and the synagogues in particular is presented by Stuart Miller; S. Miller, "The Rabbis and the Non-existent Monolithic Synagogue," in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue; Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed., S. Fine (London, 1999), 57–70.

adopted a more conservative attitude.³³ The Dura-Europos synagogue and the synagogue mosaics from the fourth century indeed verify the Talmudic evidence, since from that time figures appear on synagogue walls and later, on floors.

And what happened in Christian society? Who led the move there and what was the stand of the church fathers on this issue? In this case too, the first significant discoveries of Christian art are from the third century and they precede the positive attitude to such art on the part of the church fathers. Only in the second half of the fourth century did the Cappadocian fathers begin to speak in favor of art as an expedient means of education, mainly for those who were illiterate. St. Gregory of Nyssa, when referring to the martyrion of St. Theodore at Euchaita, near Amaseia in the Pontus, states “for painting, even if it is silent, is capable of speaking from the wall and being of greatest benefit. As for the mosaicist, he made noteworthy the floor to tread on.”³⁴ However, not everyone agreed with the approach of Gregory of Nyssa and some expressed profound concern about the use of images in a religious context. As an example, Epiphanius of Salamis (previously from Palestinian Eleutheropolis) is ranked among the opponents of Christian religious art. One of his claims is that, “When images are put up, the customs of the pagans do the rest.”³⁵

It is worth paying heed to the fact that the Fathers of the Church themselves often use metaphors taken from the field of art to explain theology. Time and again we find the terms “guide lines” and “underpainting” as opposed to painting to explain that the Old Testament is a prefiguration that suggests another story that exceeds it in importance,³⁶ and Athanasius even speaks of the Incarnate Logos as a painter or art restorer and of the human soul as a damaged painting that needs to be renewed and restored.³⁷

³³ J. Baumgarten, “Art in the Synagogue, Some Talmudic Views,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue; Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed., S. Fine (London, 1999), 71–86.

³⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio laudatoria Sancti ac Magni Martyris Theodori* (PG 46, col. 737 and also 757 D); C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453* (Toronto, 1986), 36–7; E. Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm,” *DOP* 8 (1954): 86–136.

³⁵ Panarion haer., 27, 6, 10; Kitzinger “Cult of Images,” 93.

³⁶ G. Ladner, “The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953), 19.

³⁷ Athanasius, *De incarnatione* 14; R. M. Jensen, *Face to Face; Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, 2005), 170–2; Ladner “Concept of Images,” 25, note 25.

The dedicatory inscriptions in most of the communal churches in cities, towns, and villages in Palaestina and Arabia, dated from the fifth to the seventh century, testify to the close collaboration between philanthropists, members of the congregation, and officeholders of various ranks in the Church administration. The bishop is usually mentioned at the start of the inscription as a form of dating, but, it seems to me, also to express his blessing of the act of erecting or renovating the church. The priest is often mentioned after him, sometimes the deacon is also named, and then the private donors who were members of the community.³⁸ From this we learn that in the minds of the people of that time, the laying of a mosaic was perceived as a joint enterprise of the Church administration and members of the congregation. Moreover, the complex and well thought out mosaics also indicate the direct involvement of the educated clergy in the planning of these intellectual decorative schemes. A distinction between the categories of low culture (that coming from the illiterate) and high culture (originating in the Church clergy) with regard to the floor mosaics in local churches is thus incorrect.³⁹ Moreover, the *ekphraseis* from the early Byzantine period show that one should avoid attributing certain ways of looking at art to intellectuals versus the illiterates. Thus, for example, Gregory of Nyssa reacts to a painting of the Binding of Isaac emotionally by saying: "I have often seen this tragic event depicted in painting and could not walk by the sight of it without shedding tears, so clearly did art present the story to one's eyes."⁴⁰ Other distinguished scholars, like St. Nilus of Sinai, Procopius of Gaza, and Choricius of Gaza, in their interpretation of works of art, have also preferred the simple literal sense without attributing to it symbolic or allegorical significance.⁴¹

In view of the clergy's involvement in the construction of churches and the didactic nature of Christian liturgy and art, it is difficult to assume that the Sages remained apathetic in granting permission for

³⁸ Thus, for example the dedicatory inscription in the chapel of Khirbat al-Kursi reads: "O Christ, help Anastasius and his wife. Amen. By grace of the Holy Trinity, this *martyrion* was renovated and paved with mosaics at the time of the most pious lover of Christ, the Bishop Thomas, by the care and concern of the most holy priests, Sommasseus and Theodore, at the time of the first indiction"; M. Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan* (Amman, 1993), 265.

³⁹ For a rejection to the "two-tiered" model in religious practice, see: P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), 19, 21.

⁴⁰ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti* (PG 46, 572 C); Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 34.

⁴¹ Maguire, *Earth and Ocean*, 6–7, 20–2.

members of the community to decorate the synagogues according to their comprehension.

I now wish to pass on to another matter touching upon the subject under discussion, that is, the attitude of Jews and Christians to the art of relief and sculpture in religious contexts during the Byzantine period.

As is generally known, the dating of the Galilean synagogues decorated with stone relief is a controversial issue.⁴² I am among those who think that the synagogue decorations at Capernaum and in Bar'am were made in the third century, and that they were fundamentally renovated during the Byzantine period. The synagogue at Chorazim, noted for its rich and varied decoration, is probably from the fourth century.⁴³ In the Golan, on the other hand, this decorative tradition continues in the synagogues of the fourth to the sixth century.⁴⁴ This can be attributed to the basaltic nature of the region, which did not encourage the creation of mosaics on account of the unavailability of limestone necessary for the preparation of the tesserae. The decorative scheme of the synagogues adorned with stone reliefs is more limited than the variety of subjects depicted in floor mosaics. The lion sculptures discovered at Capernaum, Bar'am, Chorazim, and the Golan are exceptions; they apparently flanked the Holy Ark.⁴⁵

The proximity of the synagogue at Capernaum to the octagonal church marking the site of the House of St. Peter could arouse surprise, since the monumental synagogue is not inferior to the church, which is located thirty meters away and to a great extent competed with it for the attention of visitors to the site. The explanation I wish to offer for the basic renovation of the synagogue in the Byzantine period, while ignoring its proximity to the church memorializing the house of the most senior apostle, is that the synagogue itself was a memorial site. The Capernaum synagogue is mentioned in the Gospels as a place where Jesus taught and even performed a miracle (Mark 1: 21–28; Luke 4: 31–37), as also happened in other synagogues in Galilee, the names of which are not specifically mentioned. The reason

⁴² See the recent survey of the field by D. Amit, "The Dating of Ancient Synagogues," *Cathedra* 124 (2007): 6–12 (Hebrew).

⁴³ Z. Yeivin, *The Synagogue at Korazim; The 1962–1964, 1980–1987 Excavations* (Jerusalem, 2000).

⁴⁴ Z. Ma'oz, "The Art and Architecture of the Synagogues of the Golan," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem, 1981), 98–115.

⁴⁵ Kitzinger, "Cult of Images," 93; Epiphanius, *Panarion haer.*, 27, 6, 10.

for preserving the ancient synagogue was not religious tolerance. It was preserved and retained its ancient splendor because its presence confirmed Christian historiography and also possibly because it was a focus of pilgrimage.

Such an approach to a Jewish synagogue is reflected in the itinerarium of an anonymous pilgrim from Placentia (commonly known under the name Antoninus) in relation to a synagogue in Nazareth. The pilgrim tells about a book in that synagogue in which Christ had written letters of the alphabet, and that in this synagogue there is a beam on which Christ used to sit with the other children. Christians can move and lift that beam, but Jews cannot. However, nobody is able to carry it outside.⁴⁶

Without ignoring the above-mentioned finds, the general impression is that from the end of the fourth century, Jews and Christians shared a preference for painted art over sculpture as a medium for decoration in religious contexts. The clearest expression of this in a Christian context is to be found in an inquiry received by Bishop Hypatius of Ephesos (in office from 531 to 538) from one of his suffragans, Julian of Atramytion. From this inquiry, which is known only from Hypatius's reply, we learn that though Julian is worried about the suitability of sculpture in the churches, he tolerates the worship of paintings.⁴⁷

As indicated by Kitzinger, "Sculpture—and especially sculpture in the round—was the idol *par excellence* against which Christian—and pre-Christian—opposition was directed from the start; Cf. particularly the references to the vileness of the sculpture's materials, which is one of the common-places not only of Early Christian but also of Jewish and pagan polemics against pagan idolatry."⁴⁸

It is important to mention that Epiphanius, as a strong opponent of the depiction of images, also rejects painting: "You may tell me that the Fathers abominated the idols of the gentiles, whereas we make images of saints as a memorial to them and worship these in their honor. It is surely on this assumption that some of you have dared

⁴⁶ *Antoninus' Travels*, 5; O. Limor, *Holy Land Travels: Christian Pilgrims in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1998), 221 (Hebrew); I would like to thank Hagith Sivan for this reference.

⁴⁷ P. Alexander, "Hypatius of Ephesus; A Note on Image Worship in the Sixth Century," *The Harvard Theological Review* XLV (1952): 177–84.

⁴⁸ Kitzinger, "Cult of Images," 131, note 211.

to plaster walls inside the house of God and by means of different colors to represent pictures of Peter and John and Paul... Now, first of all, let those who believe that by so doing they are honoring the apostles, learn that they are rather dishonoring them. For Paul, when he insulted the false priest, called him a plastered wall."⁴⁹

The synagogue at Dura-Europos, which is dated to the third century, is at present the only one from the end of antiquity whose walls are covered with biblical scenes. The paintings in this synagogue are well preserved thanks to special circumstances: the synagogue building was filled with earth in order to thicken the adjacent city wall. In other later synagogues, the walls were generally found in the debris, and only in a few cases were fragments of colored plaster revealed, but no remains of images were discernible. In the synagogue of Rehob, fragments of plaster that had fallen from the walls featuring a number of floral motifs and an architectural façade inside which was an inscription were found, but there was no trace of a figurative depiction.⁵⁰ In the Susiya synagogue, in one of the mosaic inscriptions in the corridor of the courtyard, the name of a priest who donated the mosaic and plastered the building's walls with lime is mentioned, thus suggesting that the walls were painted white.⁵¹ In view of the lack of evidence regarding the presence of wall paintings and the contents of the decorations in the mosaic floors, I wish to suggest that from the end of the fourth century, floor mosaics were the principal and preferred decorative medium in synagogues. The fact that these mosaics were meant to be trodden upon ensured that they would not become *ars sacra* and that no ritual of image worship would develop, like the one that started to take place in the churches.

Even in the fifth and sixth centuries, when the chancel screen began to be used in synagogues, the depictions of the sacred symbols were located in the unbounded area. By contrast, in the churches the location of the mosaics that were meant to be walked on was generally considered an unfitting place for the depiction of human figures from the Holy Scriptures, and biblical themes therefore appear mainly on the

⁴⁹ Epiphanius of Salamis, *Testament*; Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 41.

⁵⁰ Weiss, "Sepphoris Synagogue," 174, note 11; M. Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias* (Jerusalem, 1983), 22; F. Vitto, "Synagogue at Rehob," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem, 1981), 90–4.

⁵¹ J. Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic: The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues* (Jerusalem, 1978), 115–6 (Hebrew).

walls. The exceptions to this rule include the portrayals of Jonah's narrative cycle in the fourth-century mosaic from Aquileia in Italy⁵² and in the church of Mahattat el Urdi near Beit Govrin, Israel;⁵³ the depiction of Adam giving names to the animals in the Church at Huarte in Syria and in two other sites in Syria;⁵⁴ and scenes from the life of Samson and Noah's ark at Mopsuestia (Misis) in Cilicia.⁵⁵ Only seven items out of hundreds! Another exception is the ram in the Binding of Isaac, which appears several times as the sole figure of the entire narrative. I shall return to this later on. The imperial edict of 427, which forbade the depiction of crosses on floors, indicates great sensitivity in this regard and is reflected in the relatively small number of mosaics in which crosses or Christograms are depicted.

An important question meriting study is whether a change took place in Jewish society with regard to figurative art during the early Byzantine period. According to Kitzinger, the strengthening of the cult of the icons and the conversion of the paintings from art with didactic purposes to images which were the focus of a ritual, led the Jews, as early as the end of the sixth century, to adopt a strict approach in the interpretation of the Second Commandment.⁵⁶ I am aware that this prevalent assumption that the cult of the icons consolidated in the late sixth century has been recently challenged by Brubaker and Pentcheva; however, I support the former view.⁵⁷ The last mosaic featuring the zodiac and a biblical scene is the one in the synagogue at Susiya, which, according to its style, appears to be datable to the third

⁵² L. Marcuzzi, *Aquileia*, 1993, 21–3.

⁵³ G. Foerster, "The Story of Jonah on the Mosaic Pavement of a Church at Beth Govrin," *Atti del IX Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana* Vol. II. (Città del Vaticano, 1978), 289–94; R. Ovadia, "Jonah in the Mosaic Pavement at Beth Govrin," *IEJ* 24 (1974): 214–5.

⁵⁴ H. Maguire, "Adam and the Animals: Allegory and the Literal Sense in Early Christian Art," *DOP* 42 (1988): 364–73.

⁵⁵ L. Budde, *Antike Mosaiken in Kilikien* (Recklinghausen, 1969); E. Kitzinger, "Observations on the Samson Floor at Mopsuestia," *DOP* 27 (1973): 133–44; R. Stichel, "Die Inschriften des Samson-Mosaiks in Mopsuestia und ihre Beziehung zum Biblischen Text," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 71 (1978): 50–61; M. Avi-Yonah, "The Mosaics of Mopsuestia—Church or Synagogue?" in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem, 1981), 186–90.

⁵⁶ Kitzinger, "Cult of Images," 130, note 204.

⁵⁷ L. Brubaker, "Icons Before Iconoclasm?" *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto Medioevo* (Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo 45) (Spoleto, 1998), II, 1215–46; B. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, 2006), 2, 37–52.

quarter of the sixth century.⁵⁸ The Rehob synagogue, which apparently belongs to the seventh century, and whose halakhic inscription is the most striking component, also suggests this possibility.⁵⁹

In the *Adversus Judaeos* literature of the seventh century, the Jews regularly appear as those who have turned to aniconism and criticize the Christians for the use they make of images. However, many scholars are of the opinion that it is far from clear that this literary genre reflects historical reality. As many have commented, this literary genre is characterized by many rhetoric conventions and it is not necessarily a documentation of disputes that actually arose.⁶⁰ In the almost complete absence of Jewish writings referring directly to this matter, the only direct evidence that could apparently shed light on this issue is Jewish art from that period of time. Nevertheless, an examination of archaeological finds reveals that it is very limited and not unambiguous. The dating of the mosaics in the synagogues of Rehob and 'Ein-Gedi⁶¹ to the seventh century is conjectural and needs further confirmation, and the mosaic of the bet-midrash at Meroth, whose dating to the seventh century seems more substantiated, is presently exceptional in its use of animals images to illustrate Isaiah's prophecy of the End of Days, and it is uncertain whether one can draw general conclusions from it.⁶²

⁵⁸ S. Gutman, Z. Yeivin and E. Netzer, "Excavations in the Synagogue at Horvat Susiya," in *Ancient Synagogue Revealed*, ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem, 1981), 123–8.

⁵⁹ Vitto, "Synagogue at Rehob," 90–4; J. Sussman "A Halakhic Inscription from Beth-Shean Valley," *Tarbitz* 43 (1973–4): 88–158; 44 (1974–5): 193–5 (Hebrew); Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, 79–85 (Hebrew).

⁶⁰ A. Williams, *Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1936), 159–74; V. Déroche, "L'authenticité de l'Apologie contre les juifs de Léontios de Néapolis," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 110 (1986): 655–69; idem, "La polémique anti-judaïque de VI^e et VII^e siècle. Un memento inédit: Les Képhalaia," *Travaux et mémoires* 11 (1991): 275–311; C. Barber, "The Truth in Painting: Iconoclasm and Identity in Early-Medieval Art," *Speculum* 72 (1997): 1019–36.

⁶¹ Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, 31–2; S. Cohen, "Epigraphical Rabbis," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 72 (1981): 1–17; L. Levine, "The Inscription from the En Gedi Synagogue," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed., idem (Jerusalem, 1981), 140–5; Fine, *Sacred Realm*, 175; Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 261–3.

⁶² R. Talgam, "Remarks on the Mosaics of the Synagogue and Bet-Midrash," in *Merot: The Ancient Jewish Village*, eds., Z. Ilan and E. Damati (Tel Aviv, 1987), 152–3 (Hebrew); A. Ovadia, S. Mucznik and C. Gomez de Silva, "The Meroth Mosaic Reconsidered," in *Art and Archaeology in Israel and Neighbouring Countries, Antiquity and Late Antiquity*, ed., A. Ovadia (London, 2002), 569–78.

Although we lack finds lending conclusive support to Kitzinger's proposal, it seems to me that the historical logic behind it obliges us not to reject it out of hand. As we have seen throughout our discussions, the Jewish attitude to figurative art took into account the customs of the gentiles with regard to the depicted images. Just as the changes in attitude to images in the gentile society in the third and fourth centuries are what made it possible for Jews to support a lenient interpretation of the Second Commandment, there is a possibility that the ritual of images that became stronger at the end of the sixth century had the opposite effect and led to a revision and adoption of a strict approach as early as the seventh century, at least in certain Jewish circles if not in general. Evidence of a dispute about this at the beginning of the Muslim period is provided by Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Leviticus 26:1: "and figured stone you shall not place in your land, to bow down upon it...but a pavement figured with images and likenesses you may make on the floor of *miqdash* *sheikhon*. And do not bow down to it, for I am the Lord your God." I agree with Fine that this text could be an apologia for figurative mosaics at a time when opposition to this had commenced and intentional disfigurement was already taking place.⁶³ The order "do not bow down to it" in my view directly refers to the *proskynesis* being practiced before images in churches.

Another question is why we know nothing about Jewish art in Byzantium during the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. This can possibly be explained by lack of archaeological excavations in areas populated by Jews, but it is also probable that Jewish art became non-figural and less common in number until its complete disappearance.

III. THE BIBLICAL TEXT AS A RELIGIOUS TEXT SHARED BY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN ARTISTS IN BYZANTIUM

We shall now examine what happened when the two religions began using a common reservoir of biblical images and topics. How did the two competing cultures react to the risk that the use of the same repertoire might blur the differences between them? And were there contradictory views in their response?

⁶³ Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 120–1.

In order to better understand how Jews and Christians responded to their equal veneration of the same text, we should take a closer look at the selected themes, their iconography, and their location within the sacred space.

There were several ways to respond to the appropriation of the biblical text.

1. The first strategy relates to the careful selection of themes and the omission of others. I would be very surprised, for instance, to find the figure of Melchizedek, King of Salem, in a Jewish synagogue, but not at all astonished to see the figure of Aaron there (Fig. 4). The offerings of Melchizedek to Abraham are the earliest Eucharistic sacrifice in Christian theology and the Epistle to the Hebrews already likens this king to Jesus.⁶⁴ For Christians, the figure of Melchizedek, as indicated by Simon, served to prove the antiquity of his priesthood over that of Aaron and to deny Israel the privilege of being the first to receive the divine calling.⁶⁵ The Early Byzantine iconography of Melchizedek and its relationship to polemical literature has recently been discussed by Revel-Neher, so I therefore permit myself to move on and examine a second strategy that requires us to pay attention to more subtle details.⁶⁶

There are also examples of subjects that were depicted and later concealed. Above the Torah ark in the first phase of the wall paintings in the Dura-Europos synagogue, there is a depiction of a vine, shaped like a tree. Kraeling identifies it as the Tree of Life, interprets it as a symbol of the Torah, and associates it with Jewish eschatological hopes (Fig. 5).⁶⁷ Later on the motif of the single tree disappeared completely from the repertoire of Jewish art in Late Antiquity and I wonder what the cause was. I would like to suggest that it became inappropriate for the decoration of a synagogue due to the Christian perception of

⁶⁴ On Melchizedek in the Christian tradition, see: G. Bardi, "Melchisédech dans la tradition patristique," *RB* 35 (1926): 496–509; 36 (1927): 25–45.

⁶⁵ M. Simon, "Melchisedech dans la polémique entre juifs et chrétiens et dans la légende," *Recherches d'histoire judéo-chrétienne* (Paris, 1962), 101–26.

⁶⁶ E. Revel-Neher, "The Offering of the King-Priest: Judeo-Christian Polemics and the Early Byzantine Iconography of Melchizedek," in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, 9th ed., ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem, 2004), 271–300.

⁶⁷ C. Kraeling, *The Synagogue—The Excavations at Dura Europos, Final Report*, VIII/1 (New Haven, 1956), 62–3; Kessler, *Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue*, 159.

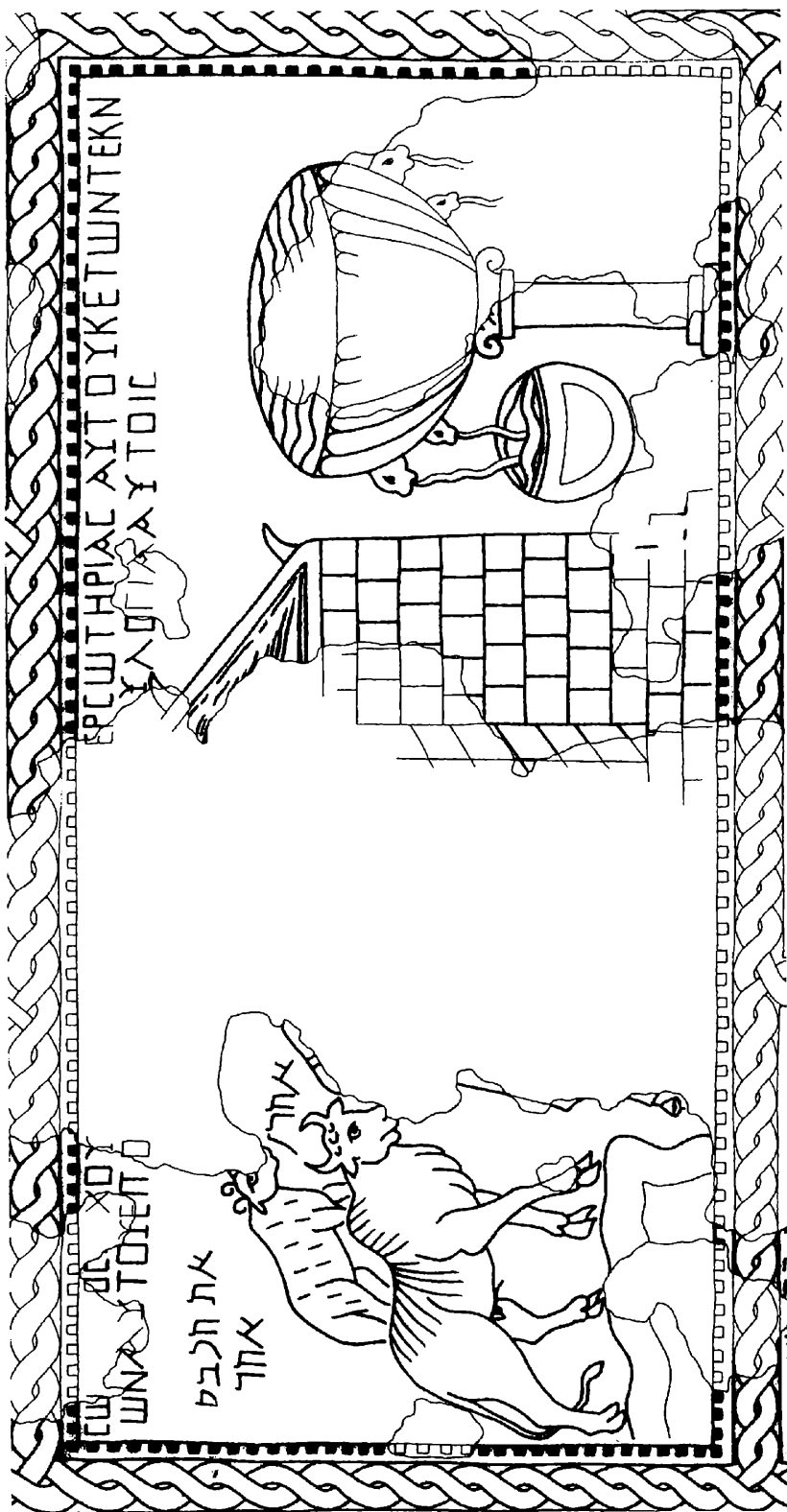


Fig. 4: The figure of Aaron at Sepphoris (Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue; Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* [Jerusalem, 2005], 79, fig. 21).



Fig. 5: The first phase of the wall paintings above the Torah Shrine in the Dura-Europos synagogue (C. H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue—The Excavations at Dura Europos, Final Report, VIII/1* [New Haven, 1956]).

the cross as the new Tree of Life and the prominent role it played in Christian art.

2. What happens when Jews and Christians choose to depict the same biblical story and how do they change the focus or adapt certain details to fit their individual interpretations of the biblical narratives?

The Binding of Isaac appears in the panel above the Torah ark in the first stage of decoration in the synagogue of Dura-Europos and later on in the mosaic floors of the Sepphoris (Fig. 2, color) and Beth Alpha (Fig. 1, color) synagogues. The depiction of the Binding of Isaac in the synagogue symbolizes God's promise to Abraham; it seems

to convey the message that even after the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jews were still God's beloved children. The Binding was an historical event from the distant past, but the promise retained its validity. In Christian art, the Binding has Christological significance and is regarded as the prefiguration of the Crucifixion of Jesus. The Christians claimed that they, and not the Jews, were the recipients of the promise given to Abraham because of his steadfast faith (Galatians 3–4), and in their traditions they transferred the place of the Binding from Mount Moriah to Golgotha. As already indicated by Avigdor Shinan, the emphasis in Christian art was placed on the sacrifice, while in Jewish art it marked the divine intervention. Unlike the symbolic appearance of the ram in several church mosaic floors in the region, the narrative approach in the depiction of the Binding at Sepphoris is similar to the one at Beth Alpha.

Let us examine the figure of the ram in the Binding of Isaac scene more closely. In the Massuh church (Fig. 6, color) and in the baptistry chapel in the complex of the Madaba cathedral (Fig. 7, color), the ram is tethered with a rope to a tree and not entangled by its horns in a thicket, as stated in Genesis. This detail also appears in the Binding scene in the synagogues of Beth Alpha and Sepphoris and has its source in a Jewish midrash. The midrash tells us that God created the ram that would replace Isaac during the six days of Creation and since then it had awaited this designation.⁶⁸ The phenomenon of details derived from a Jewish midrash and appearing in Christian illustrated Bibles is well known and has been discussed extensively with regard to the Ashburnham Pentateuch, the Cotton Genesis, and the Vienna Genesis. We should be very careful interpreting a visual motif explained by a midrash and not automatically argue that this is proof for the Jewish origin of Christian art.

⁶⁸ *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Vayera, 101; *Targum Ps. Jonathan*, Gen. 22; 33; *Pirqei Avot* 5:6; Joseph Gutmann, "The Sacrifice of Isaac: Variations on a Theme in Early Jewish and Christian Art," in *Sacred Images, Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed., idem (Northampton, 1989), 115–22; R. Jensen, "The Offering of Isaac in Jewish and Christian Tradition, Image and Text," *Biblical Interpretation* 2/1 (1994): 83–110; R. Talgam, "Similarities and Differences between Synagogue and Church Mosaics in Palestine during the Byzantine and Umayyad Periods," in *From Dura Europos to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* 40, eds., L. Levine and Z. Weiss (Portsmouth, 2000), 102–3; M. Bregman, "The Depiction of the Ram in the Aqedah Mosaic at Beit Alpha," *Tarbiz* 51 (1982): 306–9 (Hebrew).

While studying the figure of the ram, we should also pay attention to the differences. As we have seen, there was no consensus regarding the depiction of the cross on floors, but a semi-hidden or ambivalent appearance was perceived as legitimate. It is very possible that the creators of the mosaics in some of the Christian buildings in Jordan sought to allude to the form of the cross by the way in which they positioned the ram in the Binding of Isaac against the background of a fruit tree.⁶⁹ Such a way of portraying the ram is totally absent from the known Jewish depictions and can also be understood in light of the description of the cross as a tree in the writings of the church fathers and in art.

The mosaic in the synagogue of Gerasa has been treated only partially and in a desultory manner and therefore should be reconsidered (Fig. 8). The long rectangular panel extending along almost the full length of the narthex features Noah's sons and the animals leaving the ark. At the left end the heads of Shem and Japheth, identified by means of Greek inscriptions, are visible. Above them are the remains of the top of a tree, a dove sitting on one of the branches with an olive branch in its beak. The adjacent area has been destroyed, but further along in the panel, arranged in three registers, are depictions of the animals that emerged from the ark. To date, this is the only known example of a biblical scene in a synagogue narthex and where the biblical figures are identified by means of Greek inscriptions and not Hebrew ones. In the other synagogues containing biblical scenes, it is notable that the artists sought to maintain the status of Hebrew as the holy tongue. The figure of Noah and his ark often appear in various media in Christian art.⁷⁰ In the early Christian writings,⁷¹ Noah was interpreted as

⁶⁹ Piccirillo, *Mosaics of Jordan*, 118, 178–9.

⁷⁰ Noah in the ark is one of the earliest biblical subjects that was adopted by Christian art and appears in catacomb paintings and early Christian sarcophagus reliefs. The scene is presented in an abbreviated fashion and Noah appears in an orant posture in a box-like ark floating on the waters of the flood and about to receive the dove with the olive branch. On the third-century coins of Apamea, a large chest is portrayed, bearing representations of Noah and his wife, and upon the ark is written "Noah." (R. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London, 2000,) 65–6, 80–4). Depictions of the Deluge take a very prominent place in the Vienna Genesis and the Ashburnham Pentateuch (K. Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination* (London, 1977), 76 and Pl. 23, 120–1). The Deluge scene in the Cotton Genesis has been preserved only in the mosaic copy of San Marco in Venice. Noah's ark is surrounded by various animals on a mosaic floor at Mopsuestia in Cilicia (see my expanded discussion of this floor below).

⁷¹ For comprehensive treatments of the subject, see: J. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden, 1968);



Fig. 8: Noah's sons and the animals leaving the ark in the synagogue of Gerasa (E. Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece* [London, 1934], Pl. IX).

an exemplar of righteousness and a symbol of deliverance by virtue of faith.⁷² His emergence from the ark was interpreted as prefiguring the resurrection of Christ⁷³ and he was conceived as the founder of a new race of mankind.⁷⁴ The wood of the ark prefigures the cross, and the ark as a mean of salvation also parallels the Church.⁷⁵ Noah also came to be seen as a sort of preacher of repentance⁷⁶ and his watery travail was often understood as an Old Testament allusion to baptism.⁷⁷

The mosaic in the Gerasa synagogue is only partially preserved, but from what remains it seems that a depiction of the ark was not included on the left side of the panel since insufficient space was left for it, and there is no logic in assuming that it stood on the right side of the panel and was the target of the marching animals, in a scene that depicts the disembarkation (as indicated by the dove with an olive branch in its beak). An altar for burnt-offerings was possibly depicted next to Noah's sons, but this is by no means certain. We do not know whether Noah himself was portrayed, but it can be said that he certainly did not appear on his own. There is a Jewish midrash (*Genesis Rabbah* 30.6) that after the disembarkation a sacrifice was offered to God not by Noah but by his son Shem. The midrash tells that Noah, having once forgotten to give the lion its daily food, was attacked by the beast and no longer possessed the bodily wholeness that a priest had to have. *Numbers Rabbah* 4, 8 reports that Noah transferred to Shem the priestly garments he had inherited from Adam. We may ask ourselves whether the somewhat negative approach toward Noah was a Jewish polemic reaction to the significance attributed to his figure by the Christians. Moreover, as noted by Revel-Neher, Jewish targumim

N. Cohn, *Noah's Flood, The Genesis Story in Western Thought* (New Haven, 1996), 23–31. In the following discussion I will limit myself only to few references.

⁷² Letter to the Hebrews, 11: 7.

⁷³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis XVII, De Spiritu Sancto*, 10 (PG 33. 981 A); E. Syrus, *Hymns on the Nativity I (A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, series II. 13. 225)*; Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Genesim lib. II. 5* (PG 69, 65 B–C); Augustine, *In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus IX. 11* (PL 35. 1464).

⁷⁴ Origen, *Homilia in Ezechielem IV. 8* (PG 13, 703); idem, *Contra Celsum*, IV. 41 (PG 11, 1096).

⁷⁵ Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 138 (PG 6, 793); M. Van Esbroeck, "Une homélie sur l'église attribuée à Jean de Jérusalem," *Le Muséon* 86 (1973): 283–304.

⁷⁶ II Peter 2:5; I Clement 7. 6; Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* III. 19 (PG 6, 1146–48).

⁷⁷ I Clement 9.4; Tertullian, *De baptismo* 8.

and early midrashim see in Melchizedek the figure of Shem,⁷⁸ succeeding in integrating him into an authentic Jewish lineage. Converting Melchizedek into an ancestor of Abraham solved the problems raised by the signs of respect shown to him by the Patriarch.⁷⁹ A statement in the Babylonian Talmud indicates that this tradition was widespread.⁸⁰

Furthermore, according to *Genesis Rabbah* (14.8 and 56.14) and *Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer* 12, the altars of Adam, Cain and Abel, Noah, and Abraham were located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. A clear indication that the church fathers were well acquainted with those Jewish traditions is given to us by Isidore of Seville, who writes that the Jews claimed that Shem, Noah's son, whom they call Melchizedek, was the first who built the city Salem after the flood, the city of Melchizedek. Salem was later controlled by the Jebusites, whence its name Jebus. From the combination of both names of the city emerges the name Hierosolyma.⁸¹ Jerome also identified Melchizedek with Shem.⁸²

The omission of the ark and maybe also the figure of Noah from the scene are very significant iconographic details, since they distinguish this depiction from most depictions of this theme in Christian art. The scene in the Gerasa synagogue does not emphasize the ark or the figure of Noah as Christian literature and most Christian representations of this scene do. Rather, its interest is the covenant which God had made with Noah and his descendants after the flood, according to which the laws of nature would never again be abrogated; this covenant also renewed the blessing given by God to Adam: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered (Genesis 9: 1–2)."⁸³

A comparison of the synagogue's mosaic at Gerasa to the floor mosaic decorating a church at Mopsuestia in Cilicia best illustrates

⁷⁸ *Targum Jonathan and Targum Yerushalmi to Genesis 14: 18; Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer 8, 27; Midrash Aggadah 1, 23.*

⁷⁹ Revel-Neher, "The Offering of the King-Priest," 290–1.

⁸⁰ B. Nedarim 32b.

⁸¹ *Etymologiae* XV, 1,5.

⁸² Epistle 73, PL 22, cols. 676–81.

⁸³ The significance of the covenant between Noah and God in the secessionist priesthood literature of last centuries before the Christian era and especially in the Book of Jubilees is treated by R. Elior, *Temple and Chariot, Priests and Angels, Sanctuary and Heavenly Sanctuaries in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem, 2002), 101, 146–50 (Hebrew).

the different choices (Fig. 9).⁸⁴ Of the three depictions in the nave at Mopsuestia, only one has survived intact. Noah's ark is in its center, surrounded by various animals. The ark is depicted as a chest on four legs and on its cover there is a Greek inscription ΚΙΒΩΤΟΣ ΝΩΕ Ρ, which may perhaps be translated as: "the ark of Noah the R[edeemer]." The word κιβωτός (box or chest) applied in the Septuagint to both Noah's ark and the Ark of the Covenant. The location of the depiction attests that it represents the ark as prefiguring the Church by which God saves Christians. In the fourth century, John Chrysostom wrote the following on the equation of the ark and the Church: "Just as in the midst of the sea the ark saved those who were inside it, so the Church saves all who have strayed. But whereas the ark merely saved, the Church does more than that."⁸⁵

3. The third type of strategy clarifies the full significance of a biblical depiction through its location within the liturgical space. For example, the proximity of the ram to the church altar or the baptismal font in the Binding of Isaac also gives liturgical significance to the theme. Perhaps the most renowned illustration is the portrayal of Abel and Melchizedek offering a sacrifice in the sanctuary of the Church of S. Vitale, and the depiction of Abel, Melchizedek, Abraham, and Isaac in the wall mosaic in the Church of S. Apollinare in Ravenna as a prefiguration of the liturgy of the Eucharist performed on the church altar.

Such examples are not limited to Christian religious buildings but appear in synagogues as well. The mosaics in the Na'aran (Fig. 10), Sepphoris, and Beth Alpha synagogues all have similar iconographic schemes, except that the biblical scene at Na'aran is located in the holy vessels panel—the proportions of which were enlarged for this purpose—and not on the other side of the zodiac, near the entrance. The reason for this placement of the scene was determined by the identity of the figure appearing in it. Daniel in the Lions' Den was depicted in front of "the sacred architectural facade," with the Hebrew inscription "Daniel Shalom" above it. His figure is portrayed there in the

⁸⁴ I hold the opinion that the building was a Christian church and not a Jewish synagogue; Budde, *Antike Mosaiken in Kilikien*; E. Kitzinger, "Observations on the Samson Floor at Mopsuestia," *DOP* 27 (1973): 133–44; R. Stichel, "Die Inschriften des Samson-Mosaiks in Mopsuestia und ihre Beziehung zum Biblischen Text," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 71 (1978): 50–61; M. Avi-Yonah, "The Mosaics of Mopsuestia—Church or Synagogue?" in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed. L. Levine (Jerusalem, 1981), 186–90.

⁸⁵ *De Lazaro Concio* VI (PG 47, 1037–8); Cohn 1996, 29–30.

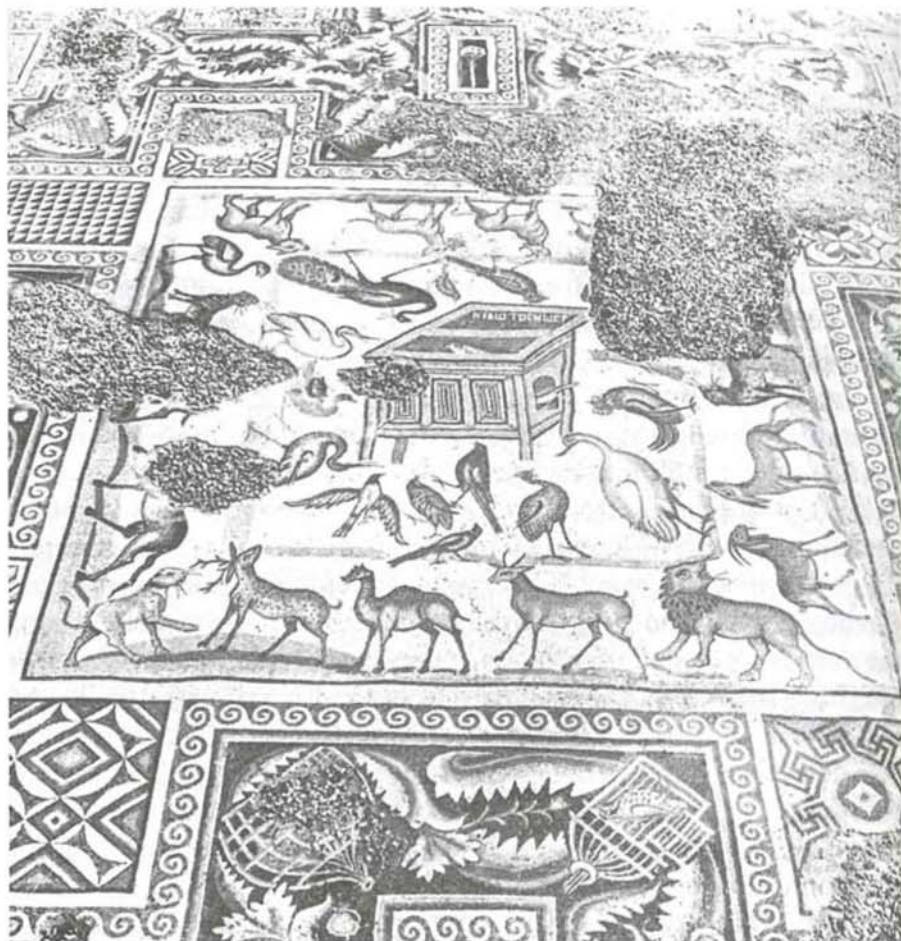


Fig. 9: Noah's ark in a church at Mopsuestia in Cilicia (M. Avi-Yonah, "The Mosaics of Mopsuestia—Church or Synagogue?" L. Levine, ed., *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* [Jerusalem, 1981], 187).

conventional orant, or praying, posture used in Christian art. Daniel, a trustee of the king thrown into the lions' den because of his refusal to obey a royal order that was contrary to the Torah, continued to pray three times a day. God saved him and the wicked were duly punished. The choice of Daniel is self-evident, but the "transfer" of the scene to its present location, close to the symbols reflecting Jewish liturgy, should be attributed to the common appearance and significance of the figure of Daniel in the Lions' Den in Christian art. Especially noteworthy is the depiction of Daniel in the Lions' Den in a wall painting

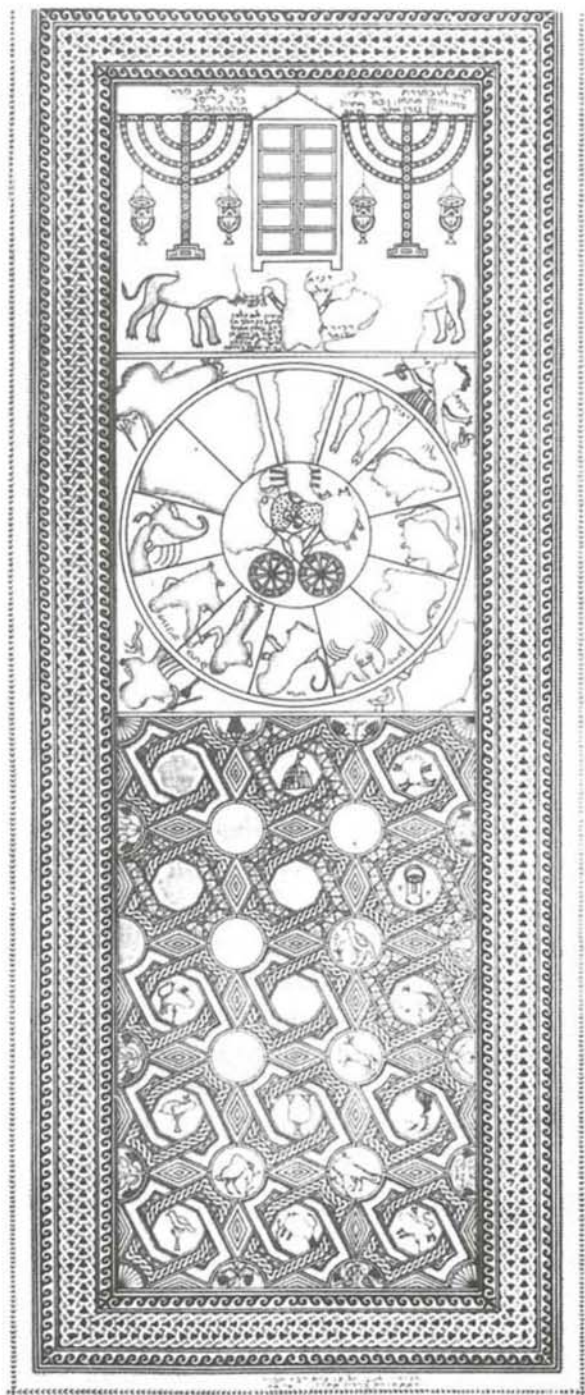


Fig. 10: The mosaics in the Na'aran synagogue (L. Vincent, "Une sanctuaire dans la region de Jericho: La synagogue de Na'arah," RB 68 (1961), Pl.VII).

adorning a Christian burial cave in Lohamei ha-Getaot in the Galilee, published a long while ago by Gideon Foerster.⁸⁶

Daniel was interpreted as a model of the brave and righteous Christian who refuses to bow down to idols, even willing to undergo persecution and death as a martyr for his faith. His vision, in which he saw four animals and behind them a human figure given eternal dominion over the world, was conceived by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, and Hippolytus as a prediction of Christ's final judgment. The designer of the mosaic borrowed the praying posture from Christian art, but took care to elucidate the Jewish context of the prayer. The background to this was possibly a latent struggle for possession, and the mosaic's designer sought to restore Daniel to the context from which he had been expropriated. The pair of lions flanking "the sacred facade" at Beth Alpha, and the lions decorating the Holy Ark and *bema* in some synagogues, intensify the integration of the two subjects.

Steven Fine, who discusses the interaction between liturgy and decoration, remarks that the figures depicted in the floor mosaic reflect the prayer leader (*sheliah tzibbur*) passing before the Ark—Daniel at Na'aran and Aaron who stands near the altar of the Tabernacle in the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic. He claims that the prayer leader, in a phenomenological manner, is transformed into a high priest or a Daniel.⁸⁷ Accepting his claim, I suggest viewing this phenomena as an echo of church decorations in which saints or figures from the Holy Scripture serve as paradigms for the adherents performing the liturgy.

4. The depiction of the Angels' Visit to Abraham and Sarah at Elonei-Mamre presents yet another option. Its appearance in the panel adjacent to the synagogue entrance at Sepphoris has surprised many scholars of Jewish art (Fig. 11). This scene had not previously appeared in early Jewish art up to the fourteenth century, and it seems that its use in Christian art as a prefiguration of the Annunciation and the Holy Trinity was expropriated from Jewish art. Against this background, the appearance of the scene at Sepphoris appears to be the declaration of a counterclaim. If Weiss is correct in his recon-

⁸⁶ G. Foerster, "A Painted Burial Cave near Kibutz Lohme ha-Getaot," in *Qadmoniot Ha-Galil Ha-maaravi*, ed., M. Yedaya (Tel Aviv, 1986), 416–31 (Hebrew).

⁸⁷ S. Fine, "A Liturgical Interpretation of Ancient Synagogue Remains in Late Antique Palestine," in *Continuity and Renewal; Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem, 2004), 416–8.

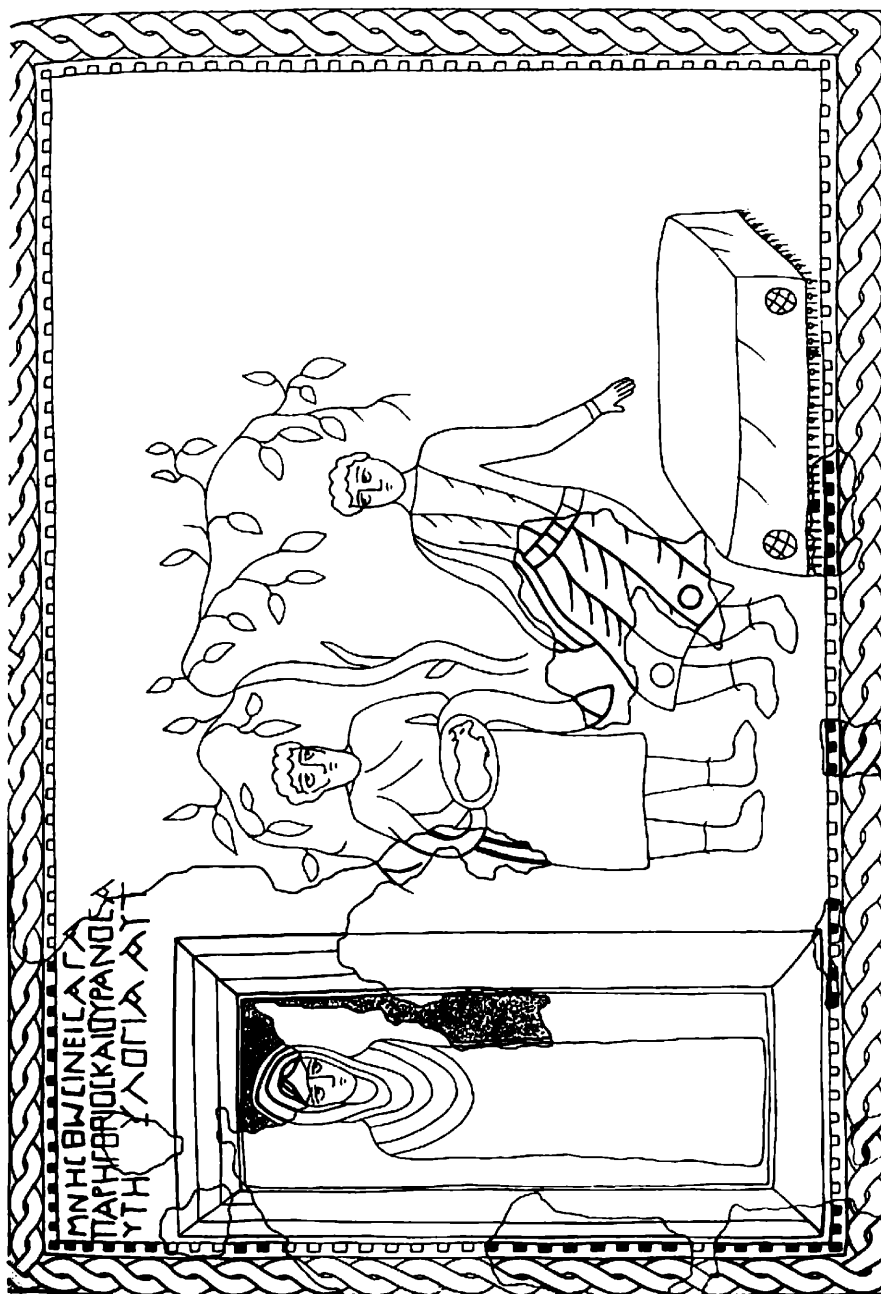


Fig. 11: The Angels' Visit to Abraham and Sarah at Elonei-Mamre in the synagogue at Sepphoris (Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue; Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* [Jerusalem, 2005], 159, fig. 100).

struction of this scene,⁸⁸ and I believe he is, then we have to admit that there might be cases in which the scenes that appear in Jewish art are replicas of Christian iconography. Nevertheless, what lends a Jewish interpretation to this scene is the mosaic's wider context or, in other words, its general iconographic scheme. In contrast to a literary work, which is conceived and unfolds in a linear or chronological form (word after word and page after page), a synagogue or church mosaic is conceived in its entirety almost immediately. Later, during the process of individual decipherment of the various components, the viewer is always conscious of the work of art as a whole, which serves as a key to understanding its details.

IV. THE IMITATION OF THE TABERNACLE AND THE TEMPLE IN THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE CHURCH

The Tabernacle and the Temple have served as archetypes of both the church and the synagogue. This idea is clearly reflected in the mosaic panel close to the Holy Ark in which Jewish liturgical objects are depicted (Fig. 12, color). Scholars are divided with regard to their exact identification and significance. Are these objects connected with the Tabernacle and the Temple, or are they just a depiction of objects that stand in the synagogue (the Holy Ark and the seven-branched candelabrum made of stone or marble, examples of which have been found in a number of synagogues)? My first claim would be that whenever the creators of a mosaic sought a very specific identification, the illustrated objects were accompanied by inscriptions, as is the case with the signs of the zodiac or the four seasons. In our case, on the contrary, it seems that they were interested in creating a transcendental symbol unrelated to a specific time and place. As most convincingly suggested by Weiss in his discussion of the mosaic in the synagogue at Sepphoris, these objects express the continuity of Jewish liturgical life from the Tabernacle to the Temple and from the latter to the synagogue as a "lesser Sanctuary," and the desire for the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in the days of the Messiah.⁸⁹ An analogy between the synagogue and the Tabernacle also emerges from the Jerusalem

⁸⁸ Weiss, "Sepphoris Synagogue," 159.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 65-77, 235-45.

Talmud.⁹⁰ The imitation of the Temple in the synagogue, as mentioned by Reiner, was not only a strategy of memory, but mainly a framework for the renewal of religious life in a world without a temple.⁹¹

The description of the church in Tyre (ca. 317) provided by Eusebius of Caesarea (265–340) reveals that as early as the fourth century the Christian basilica was regarded symbolically as both a cosmic house and as the successor to Solomon's Temple.⁹² The church's altar parallels the Holy of Holies. The parallel between the church and Solomon's Temple also emerges from the liturgy for the consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which is described by Egeria who stayed in Jerusalem from 381 to 384.⁹³ An important testimony of the symbolic perception of the church as a substitute for the Jewish Temple, a cosmic house, paradise, and the equivalent to Noah's ark is the homily on the "Dedication of the Church of the Holy Zion" attributed to John, Bishop of Jerusalem (387–417).⁹⁴ Choricus ends his speech, which was probably delivered at the time of the consecration of the Church of St. Stephen in Gaza, by comparing the church building to the Jewish Temple.⁹⁵ We also learn about the Tabernacle as the model for a church from the Syrian hymn for the Cathedral of Edessa: "Bezaleel it was who, instructed by Moses, erected the tabernacle to serve us as a model. And now Amidonius, Asaph, and Addai have built for Thee at Edessa this glorious Temple."⁹⁶ The boasting of church patrons that they had triumphed over Solomon, is also repeated in the dedicatory inscription discovered in the basilica built by Anicia Juliana in Constantinople.⁹⁷ An epigram on a wall in Anicia Juliana's palace-church in Constantinople compares the benefactress

⁹⁰ JT, Berakhot 5: 1, 9a.

⁹¹ E. Reiner, "Distraction, Temple and Sacred Place: on a Medieval Concept of Time and Place," *Cathedra* 97 (2000): 47–64 (Hebrew).

⁹² Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* X, 4, 1–48.

⁹³ Limor, *Holy Land Travels*, 48–9 (Hebrew).

⁹⁴ Van Esbroeck, "Une homélie," 283–304.

⁹⁵ *Laudatio Marciani* II, 52–4.

⁹⁶ *The Hymn of the Cathedral of Edessa*, 2; English text translated by Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 57–60.

⁹⁷ M. Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium: The Discovery and Excavation of Anicia Juliana's Palace-Church in Istanbul* (London, 1989), 102–3; J. Bardill, "A New Temple for Byzantium: Anicia Juliana, King Solomon and the Gilded Ceiling in the Church of St. Polyeuktos in Constantinople," in *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity*, eds. W. Bowden, A. Gutteridge and C. Machado (Leiden, 2006), 339–72.

to King Solomon.⁹⁸ In addition, the Scroll of Ahima'az tells about a polemic which Rabbi Shfatia conducted with the Byzantine Emperor Basilius I (867–887), who claimed the superiority of the magnificent Hagia Sophia in Constantinople over the Temple of King Solomon.

In Christian thought, the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon were a model for both the earthly Church and the heavenly Church.⁹⁹ In the Chapel of Theotokos on Mount Nebo (Fig. 13, color), at the center of an illustration of Psalms 51: 21, relating to the ceremony of sacrifices in the Temple of Jerusalem, between the two bulls, appears a sketch that is a combination of the plan of the Temple in Jerusalem and the depiction of the church building.¹⁰⁰ The shape of a church is suggested by the apse and by the central structure, which can be understood as a ciborium above the church altar. The Temple is suggested firstly by inscription and secondly by the burning fire on the altar. The ambivalence which allows for an alternative “reading” of the scheme is, in my opinion, intentional. A similar phenomenon appears in the depiction of the holy utensils in the mosaics of contemporary synagogues, as we have just seen. The proximity of the Temple's altar depicted in the mosaic to the real church altar of the chapel further strengthens the analogy between the church and the Temple. However, one should remember that while the synagogue was perceived as a substitute for the Temple, which did not compete with the latter's sanctity and did not eliminate the yearning for its reconstruction, in Christian thought the relationships were just the opposite. The Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon were perceived as the archetype of church buildings, but the latter had not only succeeded and replaced them but were also superior to them.¹⁰¹

That the Christians were well acquainted with the parallelism the Jews sought to create between the synagogue and the Temple, and that these issues were at the center of the polemic can be learned from John Chrysostom's words against those of his community who regard the synagogue as a holy place. *Inter alia*, he seeks to point out their

⁹⁸ “She alone has conquered time and surpassed the wisdom of renowned Solomon, raising a temple to received God, the richly wrought and graceful splendor of which the ages cannot celebrate”; Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium*, 34.

⁹⁹ K. McVey, “The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol,” in *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, eds., E. Ferguson, D. Scholer and P. Finney (New York, 1993), 94–121.

¹⁰⁰ Piccirillo, *Mosaics of Jordan*, 151.

¹⁰¹ Choricus, *Laudatio Marciani II*, 52–4.

error in parallelizing the Holy Ark with the Ark of the Covenant by saying: "What sort of ark is it that the Jews now have, where we find no propitiatory, no tablets of the law, no Holy of Holies, no veil, no high priests, no incense, no holocaust, no sacrifice, none of the things that made the ark of old holy and august?"¹⁰²

One should note that in contrast to the Christian depictions of the Tabernacle and the Temple, which feature a structure or plan, the customary Jewish formula is a portrayal of a catalogue of liturgical objects.

A similar idea that the Tabernacle constitutes a model for the church, but relating to the heavenly church, appears in the hymns of Ephrem the Syrian on Paradise,¹⁰³ and in the writings of other Syrian theologians. According to Jacob of Serugh, on Mount Sinai Moses saw a vision in which the heavenly archetype of the eternal Church appeared, of which the Tabernacle built by Bezalel is the earthly copy.¹⁰⁴ In the Ashburnham Pentateuch, the Tabernacle is depicted in the form of a church, and the altar for sacrifices is replaced by the altar of a church (fol. 76r).¹⁰⁵ I am of the opinion that the juxtaposition of this representation with the scene showing Moses at Sinai that appears above it is meaningful. The association of the two scenes is not explained by the biblical text, but is made clear by Syriac writers of the fifth and early sixth century, who show the influence of Alexandrian exegetes. This interpretation accords well with Narkiss's suggestion that the Ashburnham Pentateuch had a Syriac precursor.¹⁰⁶ It should be noted that even on the top of the altar, which is depicted in the upper half of the miniature, instead of sacrificial oxen a chalice and loaves of bread appear that clearly prefigure the Christian Eucharist.

The Chapel of the Theotokos in the Baslica of Moses on Mount Nebo takes the discussion to the mosaics featuring a pair of bulls or a pair of lambs opposite one another, generally close to the church altar or an altar depicted in the floor mosaic. Such depictions can be seen in the Church of the Lions,¹⁰⁷ the Church of the Rivers,¹⁰⁸ the Church

¹⁰² John Chrysostom, *Adversus Judaeos*, 6:7, PG 48, 914; S. Fine, "From Meeting House to Sacred Realm; Holiness and the Ancient Synagogue," in *Sacred Realm; The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World*, ed., idem (New York, 1996), 42.

¹⁰³ Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil," 53–77.

¹⁰⁴ McVey, "Doomed Church," 94–121.

¹⁰⁵ Fol. 76r; Weitzmann 1977, 125, pl. 47.

¹⁰⁶ B. Narkiss, *The Ashburnham Pentateuch* (Valencia, 2007), 394–402.

¹⁰⁷ Piccirillo, *Mosaics of Jordan*, 236–7.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 240–1.

of the Priest Wa'il at Umm al-Rasas,¹⁰⁹ and the Chapel of Theotokos in the monastery at 'Ayn al-Kanish in the 'Uyun Musa valley.¹¹⁰

In the Chapel of Theotokos in the Baslica of Moses on Mount Nebo and in the nave mosaic of the Church of Lot and Procopius at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat,¹¹¹ a pair of bulls accompanied by a quotation from Psalms 51: 21: "Then they shall lay calves upon Thy altar," provides us with a key to the comprehension of the other depictions.¹¹² We can also learn of the significance of the two lambs next to the altar from the words of Cyril of Alexandria, who used the art of painting to help Bishop Acacius understand how the two lambs that were required in the Jewish Tabernacle could both stand for Jesus.¹¹³ The key text for understanding this matter is the Epistle to the Hebrews (chapter 9). Since Jesus sacrificed himself, there is thus no need for blood sacrifices such as those offered in the Temple in Jerusalem, and redemption is by virtue of faith alone. This perception underlies the daily mass. The Epistle of Barnabas also parallels Jesus with the cow that was slaughtered and burnt on the altar, and whose ashes were scattered on the public to cleanse them of their sins.¹¹⁴

Reliable testimony originating from Palestine with regard to the consideration of the Eucharistic rite in terms of the offering of a sacrifice is to be found in the hagiography of Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymius* (chapter 29, 15–19).

Judaism, as a religion in which the offering of animal sacrifices was part of the worship of God, lost this part of the ritual when the Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E. During the third and fourth centuries C.E., elements relating to the offering of sacrifices in the Temple were added to the synagogue liturgy. Worship of God in the Tabernacle and the Temple was temporarily replaced by prayer in the synagogue.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 242–3.

¹¹⁰ M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata, *Mount Nebo New Archaeological Excavations 1967–1997* (Jerusalem, 1998), 359–63.

¹¹¹ Piccirillo, *Mosaics of Jordan*, 164–5.

¹¹² A similar depiction also appears in the Acropolis Church at Ma'in (dated to the eighth century); Piccirillo, *Mosaics of Jordan*, 200–1; R. de Vaux, "Une mosaïque byzantine à Má'in (Transjordanie)," *RB* 47 (1938): 227–58.

¹¹³ Letter 41, PG 77, col. 217–220; *The Letters of St. Cyril of Alexandria*, trans. J. McEnerney, (Washington, D. C. 1987), 180–181; H. Kessler, "Medieval Art as Argument," in *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed., B. Cassidy (Princeton, 1993), 59–60.

¹¹⁴ P. Azara, "The Golden Calf. The Bull in the Collective Imagination of the Ancient Mediterranean," *The Bull in the Mediterranean World, Myths & Cults* (Athens, 2003), 46–7.

The Sages formulated this as follows: "Just as altar worship is termed worship, so prayer is termed worship" (Ta'anit 2, 1).

The subject of offerings is depicted in the synagogue mosaics at Sephoris (Fig. 14) and Susiya (Fig. 15).¹¹⁵ These depictions should be understood primarily as a declaration of the Jewish belief in internal Jewish discourse. But in addition, it demonstratively declared Judaism to be a religion based on sacrifices, something which Christianity sought to undermine.

In the floor mosaic in the presbytery of the Chapel of Theotokos in the monastery at 'Ayn al-Kanish (Fig. 16, color), one can discern a pair of lambs against the background of a fruit tree on either side of a curtain suspended between two columns, and above them is an arch decorated with a conch pattern. This depiction shows great similarity to the mosaic decorating the panel adjacent to the secondary *bema* in the synagogue at Susiya. In the Christian chapel, the pair of lambs is not only the two daily sacrifices offered in the Jewish Tabernacle and Temple, which had been replaced by the offering of Jesus, but also symbolizes the permanence of the Divine promise: the one given on the occasion of the Binding and the one made by the Lamb of God. Both covenants are parts of one truth. The biblical promise is realized in the Christian gospel.

I wish to sharpen this comparison and to point out the difference in the rendition of the "sacred architectural facade"—the central motif in both depictions. At Susiya, as in the depictions in all the other synagogue mosaics, the prominent components are the two wooden doors closing the entrance (Fig. 15). The curtain is not shown. In the chapel at 'Ayn al-Kanish (Fig. 16, color), on the other hand, the important component is the curtain tied at its center, and the wooden doors are absent. This difference is not without reason, but falls into line with the depictions in the mosaics of the other synagogues, in which wooden doors are portrayed in great detail. I suggest explaining this difference by reference to the significance attributed to the Temple's curtain in Christian thought, as symbolizing the flesh of Jesus (Epistle to the Hebrews 10:19–20). The kernel of this is the tradition appearing in the books of the New Testament, according to which the Temple's curtain was torn in two at the time of Jesus's death on the cross (Matthew 27:

¹¹⁵ Gutman, Yeivin and Netzer, "Excavations in the Synagogue at Horvat Susiya," 123–8.



Fig. 14. The offering of sacrifices in the Tabernacle and the Temple depicted in the synagogue's mosaics at Sepphoris (Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue; Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* [Jerusalem, 2005], 82, fig. 25).

39–41). At his death, Jesus entered the Holy of Holies in the heavenly Temple and the curtain in the earthly Temple was therefore torn, and thus was removed the partition separating the holy from the Holy of Holies. In the sixth century, Constantine of Antioch, as indicated by Kessler, refers to these issues: “So now, my friends, the blood of Jesus makes us free to enter boldly into the sanctuary by the new, living way which he has opened for us through the curtain, the way of his flesh” (*Christian Topography* V. 29).¹¹⁶ Likewise, in the first troparion recited as part of the liturgy of Jerusalem about a week after Palm Sunday, when the public had gathered in front of Golgotha in order to commemorate the suffering of Jesus on the cross, it is stated: “Today the Temple curtain is torn as a proof to sinners, and the sun hides

¹¹⁶ Kessler, “Medieval Art as Argument,” 64–5.

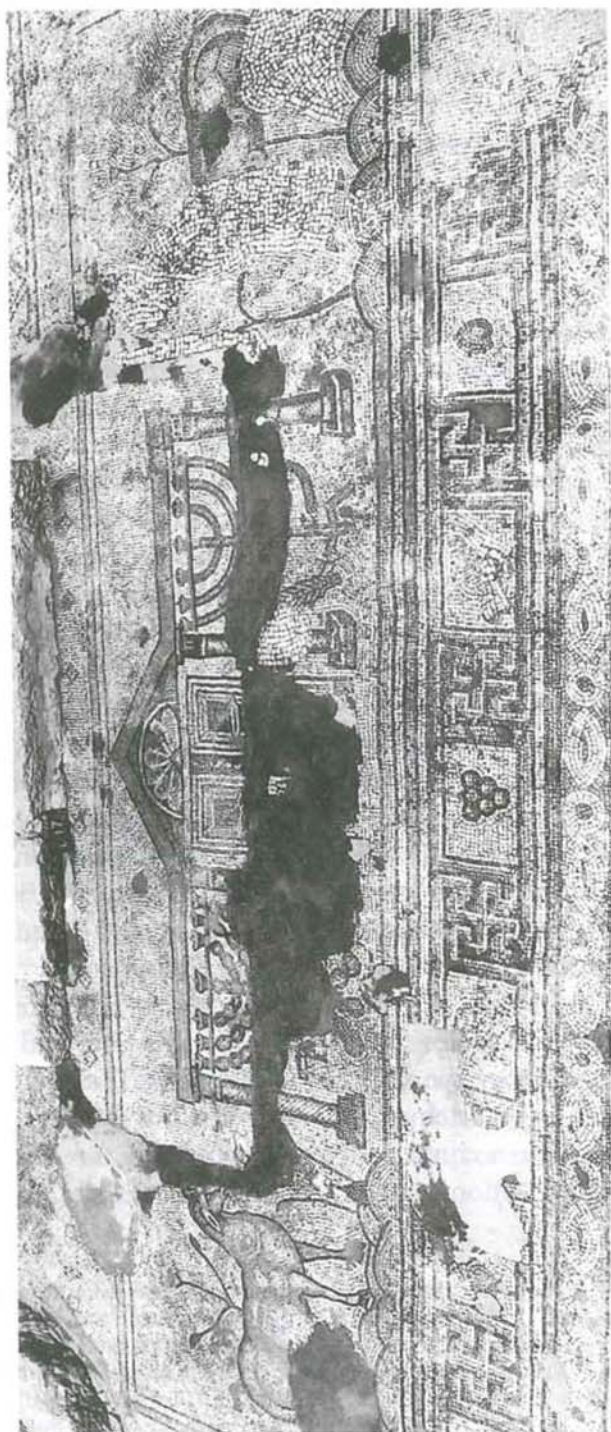


Fig. 15: The mosaic panel adjacent to the secondary bema in the synagogue at Susiya (Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority).

its light on seeing the crucified Lord.” The term “sinners” is directed at the Jews.¹¹⁷

The depiction of the closed doors in Jewish mosaics, on the other hand, places a clear boundary between the two realms, the holy and the Holy of Holies. The only synagogue mosaic that deviates from this rule is the one in the Samaritan synagogue in Beth Shean (Scythopolis).¹¹⁸ In this depiction, the curtain is spread over the entire surface of the facade, and there are no signs of wooden doors behind it. Sources describing the church sometimes mention a curtain that apparently hid the church altar and strengthened the concept of the bounded area for priests, in which the altar as a sort of Holy of Holies was located.

The mosaic in the presbytery of the Church of Bishop Sergius at Umm al-Rasas testifies to the existence of another layer of significance in mosaics relating to the offering of sacrifices (Fig. 17, color). In front of the church altar two rams next to a pair of fruit trees with shoots rising from their bottoms are depicted, and in the middle is a medallion with a dedicatory inscription. Close to the step of the presbyterium a quotation from Psalms 87:2 is inscribed: “The Lord has loved the Gate of Zion more than the tents of Jacob.” The following verse of this Psalm mentions the “city of God,” and from this we can conclude that the term “Zion” in the inscription before us signifies Jerusalem, the heavenly city of God.¹¹⁹ The inscription in the mosaic expresses a controversy. Judaism (“the tents of Jacob”), including the biblical Jerusalem, the earthly city in which blood sacrifices were offered, has been rejected in favor of the Church in this world, “Israel of the spirit,” which forms a gate to the heavenly and eternal city of God (“Zion”). The presbytery in the earthly church thus symbolizes heavenly Jerusalem.

Each religion in its own way gave a new interpretation to the ceremonies that had taken place in the Temple and which had become an integral part of synagogue and church liturgies. The depictions at the front of a synagogue or church do not relate only to the liturgy of the present, but also to a contrasting eschatological future. According to the Christian perception, the redemption had already begun and

¹¹⁷ A. Linder, “Discussion: Jerusalem Between Judaism and Christianity in the Byzantine Period,” *Cathedra* 11 (1979): 110–9, esp. 117–8 (Hebrew).

¹¹⁸ R. Hachlili, “Synagogues in the Land of Israel; The Art and Architecture of Late Antique Synagogues,” in *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World*, ed., S. Fine (New York, 1996), pl. XXXVI.

¹¹⁹ As distinct from this, the term “Zion” in the literature of pilgrims at the end of antiquity was generally used as a topographic reference to Mount Zion.

therefore depictions of Paradise, which are missing in Jewish synagogues, make their appearance in proximity to the depictions connected with the offering of sacrifices.

In presbyteries of churches in the area of Madaba, the combination of Paradise, Tabernacle, and Temple is similar to ideas known from Apocryphal Jewish literature.

Texts, inscriptions, and the decorative scheme of Byzantine churches represent the ambiguity of the Christian attitude toward the church. The churches are not temples to Divinity but a place of assembly for the faithful. The community was what was holy and not the church that housed it. God is omnipresent and therefore the adoration that is his due is in the hearts of the believers and is not confined to a specific architectonic space. Already in the Acts of the Apostles 17:24, Paul states the following: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." In II Corinthians 6:16, he says: "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." And in Sermon 337.2 (preached on the occasion of consecrating a church) Augustine says: "As this building was made for the purpose of congregating us bodily, so that building which is ourselves, is built spiritually for God."¹²⁰ But it seems that the stance of Paul and Augustine was only partially adopted. The church was not just *Domus ecclesia* like its counterpart the Jewish synagogue, but was a *Domus Dei*. Thus the Greek inscription in the middle of the early church at Magen reads: "The holiest dwelling place of the Most High, God is in the midst of her,"¹²¹ and a ten-line inscription in the early church at Bahan (north of Tulkarm) includes the verse "Holiness befits thy house, O Lord, for evermore" (Ps. 93: 5).¹²² Depictions of the benefactors next to the cosmic elements and those relating to the Temple and Paradise in the decorative scheme of a church were intended to resolve the contradiction between the

¹²⁰ R. Markus, "How on Earth Could Places Become Holy? Origins of the Christian Idea of Holy Places," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2/3 (1994): 257-71; in footnotes 28-30 of this paper, Markus presents other references to this often repeated idea.

¹²¹ V. Tzaferis, "Early Christian Churches at Magen," in *Ancient Churches Revealed*, ed., Y. Tsafirir (Jerusalem, 1993), 283-5.

¹²² M. Avi-Yonah, R. Cohen and A. Ovadiah, "Chrches," in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed., E. Stern (Jerusalem, 1993), 309.

stance of the New Testament and the Christian architectonic sacred space which evolved in Late Antiquity (Fig. 18, color).

V. THE ATTITUDE OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS IN THEIR RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS TOWARD THE CLASSICAL HERITAGE

In analyzing the affinity between Judaism and Christianity, we should also consider—besides for their common biblical heritage—the legacy of the Greco-Roman culture that influenced these two religious entities. Did Jews and Christians react differently to imagery borrowed from classical art?

We shall now consider how these conditions affected the cosmic imagery taken from Greco-Roman art within the space of the synagogue and the church.

The universal idea that the religious building is a model of the world is reflected in the decoration of churches and synagogues, but its mode of application was different.¹²³ The penetration into early Christian theology of the idea that the holy place represents the world, should probably be attributed to the influence of Philon (Philo Judaeus) and Josephus, who interpret the Tabernacle and its sacred utensils in an allegorical way.¹²⁴ Both of them see the Tabernacle as an imitation of the cosmos.¹²⁵ In the words of Josephus: “Every one of these objects is intended to recall and represent the universe.”¹²⁶ Similar ideas appear in the writings of Origen¹²⁷ and later in those of Theodore of

¹²³ M. Eliade, “Der heilige Raum und die Sakralisierung der Welt,” *Das Heilige und das Profane: Vom Wesen des Religiösen* (Hamburg, 1957), 13–39.

¹²⁴ D. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Assen, 1993).

¹²⁵ *The Life of Moses*, II 74–88, III, 179–189 (F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb, *Philo* 1–10); idem, *Questions and Answers on Exodus*, II, 83 (Ex. XXVI) (R. M. Marcus, Loeb, suppl. 2, 132–133); idem, *The Preliminary Studies*, 117. Also see: J. Daniélou, “Le symbolisme du temple de Jérusalem chez Philon et Josèphe,” *Le symbolisme cosmique des monuments religieux*, Actes de la conférence internationale qui a eu lieu sous les auspices de l’Is.M.E.O. à Rome, avril-mai, 1955, *Institutio Italiano per il Medio ed Esterno Oriente*, serie orientale, 14 (Roma, 1957), 83–90.

¹²⁶ ἕκαστα γὰρ τούτων εἰς ἀπομίμησιν καὶ διατύπωσιν τῶν ὅλων; *Jewish Antiquities*, III, 7, 7 (179–87).

¹²⁷ In *Exodum Homilia IX*, 4.

Mopsuestia (350–428)¹²⁸ and Constantine of Antioch (sixth century).¹²⁹ The terms used by them to characterize the relationship between the universe and the Tabernacle are synonyms of the word “copy” (τύπος or μίμημα).¹³⁰ As I have already shown, the church was considered the successor of the Tabernacle and therefore should also imitate the cosmos. Provincia Arabia was subordinate to the patriarchate of Antioch and therefore it is not surprising to trace some similarities between the churches in the area of Madaba and the writings of Christian thinkers who received their education in Antioch, like Theodore of Mopsuestia and the author of the Christian Topography. A similar parallelism between the sacred utensils in the Tabernacle and cosmic elements appears in Jewish sources such as *Numbers Rabba* 2 (edited in the early medieval period), or in *Midrash Tadshe* 12: 16 (a medieval collection that draws on lost midrashim),¹³¹ and also in sixth-century *piyyutim*. In his poem for Hanukah, the liturgical poet Yannai writes: “The seven lamps of the menorah below / Are like the seven constellations above.”¹³²

From the end of the fourth century, the material world was perceived as suitable for the decoration of mosaic floors in Christian religious buildings. However, the use of personifications of cosmic elements such as Ge, Oceanus, Thalassa (Fig. 19, color), Selene, the seasons of the year, and so on commenced only in the third decade of the sixth century. In the early days of the establishment of Christianity as the state religion, prior to the complete decline of paganism, it

¹²⁸ R. Devreesse, *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste*, Città del Vaticano, 1948 (Studi e Testi, 141), 26, n. 1; W. Wolska, *La Topographie Chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustès; Théologie et Science au VI^e siècle* (Paris, 1962), 40–1.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 41–42; Cosmas Indicopleustès, *Topographie Chrétienne*, Exposition du sujet, 6 (56 C–D); II, 2 (72 D–73 A); 35 (89 D–92 A); III, 16 (141 D); 51 (160 C–D); 55 (161 D–164 A); V, 20 (201 A–B); 22 (201 D); 27 (205 C–D); 33 (208 C); 112 (245 B); VII, 11 (344 C); 71 (373 C); 82 (380 B); 86 (381 B–C), (Introduction, texte critique, illustration, traduction et notes par W Wolska-Conus, Paris, 1970).

¹³⁰ Ideas similar to those of Philo and Josephus appear in Jewish midrashim that have been incorporated in both the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud and in midrashic literature edited in the medieval period (between the eighth and the twelfth centuries); S. Laderman, ‘*Ma’aseh Ha-Mishkan*’ and ‘*Ma’aseh Breshit*’; *The Pentateuchal Tabernacle: a Symbolic Model of the Creation of the World, as Found in Jewish and Byzantine-Christian Iconography* (Ph. D. thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2000), 20–44 (Hebrew).

¹³¹ R. Berliner, (Landau), “The Interpretation of the Presence of Daniel and the Lions in the Temple Panel of the Ancient Synagogue at Na’aran,” *Judea and Samaria Research Studies* 3 (1993): 213–9.

¹³² 2: 242, lines 71–2; Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 160.

was dangerous to relate with tolerance to religious contexts that could be interpreted as idolatry. Nevertheless, the awareness of Christians of the danger of adopting the sun cult caused them to remove the figure of Helios from their repertoire. The sole exception to the absence of Helios in a Christian religious context is the mosaic in the Monastery of Kyria Maria in Beth Shean, dated to the third quarter of the sixth century (Fig. 20, color). It is significant to note that this mosaic adorns the entry hall of the monastery and not a church or a chapel. Helios and Selene appear in a medallion as busts bearing torches; the *quadriga* is absent. They are encircled by a wide ring divided into twelve compartments containing full-length figures representing the months. Helios is also featured in the earliest surviving Christian mosaic from the mid-third century tomb of the Julii beneath the Church of St. Peter in Rome. The rays of Helios were modified to resemble a cross and hence invoke Christ's ascension. As noted by Sabin MacCormack, immediately after Constantine the Great there was a marked change and the ascending chariot became a formula used exclusively for the depiction of Elijah's ascent to heaven.¹³³

Jewish art took a completely different approach. As early as the second half of the fourth century, the adoption of Helios in his chariot, the signs of the zodiac, and the personifications of the four seasons is notable. When the sun was no longer perceived as a divine being of the rival faith, which from then on was Christianity, and when its merit lay in its observance of the laws established by God, and primarily in its ability to make the existing order visible, the Jews felt free to use such images. There was actually a necessity to do so in order to better confront Christianity. These attitudes toward God the Creator, and the danger of erroneously interpreting the heavenly bodies, were already discussed by Clement of Alexandria.^{133b}

Therefore some are deceived, I know not how, and worship the divine creation, the sun and the moon and the rest of the starry host, irrationally assuming that these, the instruments of time, are gods. For by His word were they established and by the breath of His mouth is all their power.... And let not any of you worship the sun, but let him desire the Maker of the sun; nor let him deify the cosmos, but let him seek the Creator of the cosmos.

¹³³ S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981), 122–7.

^{133b} R. P. Casey, "Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Platonism," in *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, eds. E. Ferguson, D. M. Scholer, and P. C. Finney (New York, 1993), 100–1.

The fourth-century Cappadocians were particularly sensitive to this distinction, and Basil of Caesarea remarked that even the majesty of the sun pointed not to itself, but beyond itself, to “the *sophia* of the Creator with the *techne*” (*Hexaemeron* 6.10), *Sophia* is often personified as the divine, and *Techne* (τέχνη) is the skill of making, an art or craft.

It should be acknowledged that this conception is basically similar to the Jewish one as succinctly expressed in the Tosefta: “One who sees the sun or the moon, or the stars, or the constellations says, ‘Praised [be Thou, O Lord...] who made creation’” (Tosefta Berakhot 6, 6). The subordination of the heavenly bodies, especially the sun, to God is also emphasized in the sixth-century Jewish liturgical poem, or *piyyut* of Yannai on Numbers 8:

For it was You who lit the lamps / You who make the lights / who create
the heavenly bodies / who bring forth the constellations / who spread
out the stars / who light the light of the sun/ who cause to shine the
luster of the moon.

The church fathers totally rejected astrology, and for this reason the zodiac does not appear in any church, which probably facilitated its use by the Jews. A particularly important source in this regard is Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis (*Panarion* 16, 2, 1–5), who blames the Jews for following the pagans by perpetuating representations of the planets and the signs of the zodiac and converting their names into Hebrew. As indicated by Charles-Murray, in Late Antiquity and early Byzantium, the zodiac was used only in a non-iconographical form. The Christianization of the zodiac took place only at the literal level, in learned exegetical commentary and in popular preaching.¹³⁴

The wish to avoid the pagan mistake of confusing the celestial bodies established by God with the Creator is reflected in Johannes of Gaza’s famous *ekphrasis* describing a painting depicting the world. The sun group—which includes Uranus who plucked the sun disc from his heart, Atlas who carried the sun on his shoulders, and Sophia and Arete who guided its course—is unusual in comparison to known depictions of the sun god in Late Antiquity, where he is seen riding in his heavenly chariot harnessed to four horses (Fig. 21). Moreover, in this

¹³⁴ M. Charles-Murray, “The Christian Zodiac on a Font at Hook Norton: Theology, Church and Art,” in *The Church and the Arts*, ed., Diana Wood (Oxford, 1995), 87–98.

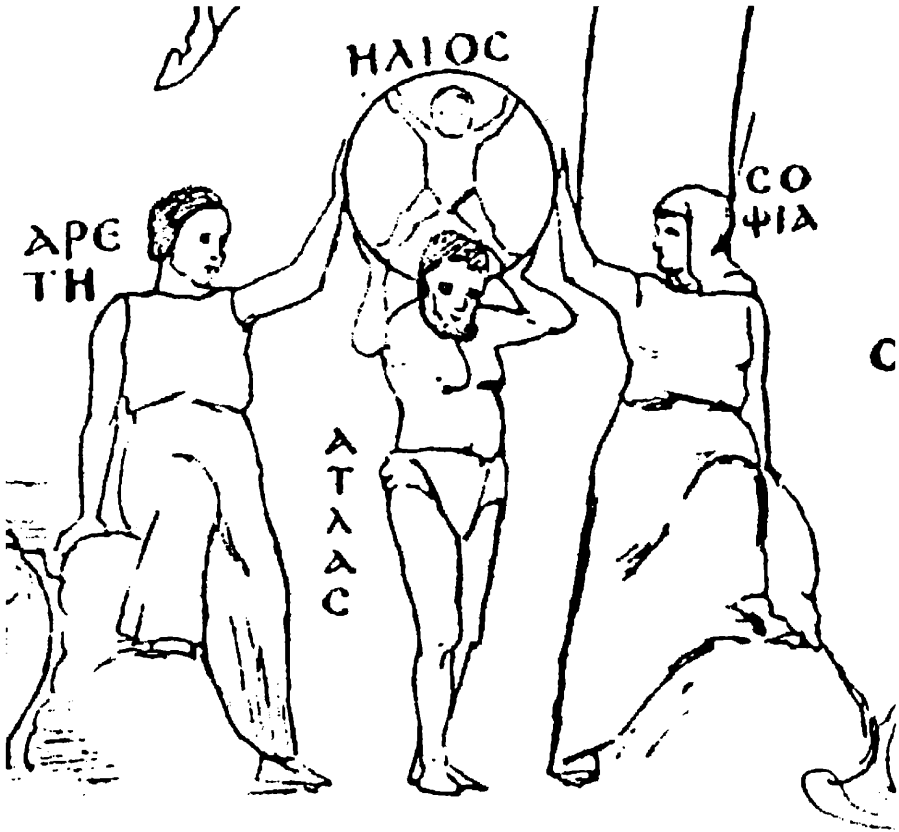


Fig. 21: The sun group in Johannes of Gaza's *ekphrasis* of a painting depicting the world (G. Krahmer, "De Tabula Mundi ab Joanne Gazaeo Descripta," PhD dissertation, University of Halle [Berlin, 1920].)

part of the *ekphrasis* Johannes abstained entirely from using the name Helios and instead called the young sun Phaethon, the son of Helios.

The different approaches of Jewish and Christian art in the fourth and fifth centuries may have stemmed from the privilege reserved by a minority culture that already, at a fairly early stage, could appropriate and infuse with new meaning symbols belonging to the majority culture, which was obliged at this time to let go of them in its quest for redefinition. The possibility of selecting symbols of identification that were close to the cosmic elements made it easier for the Jews to do so.

At Sepphoris, the image of Helios was removed from the chariot and replaced with a radiating sun disc (Fig. 22). This change is undoubtedly very significant, as it testifies to a different approach to

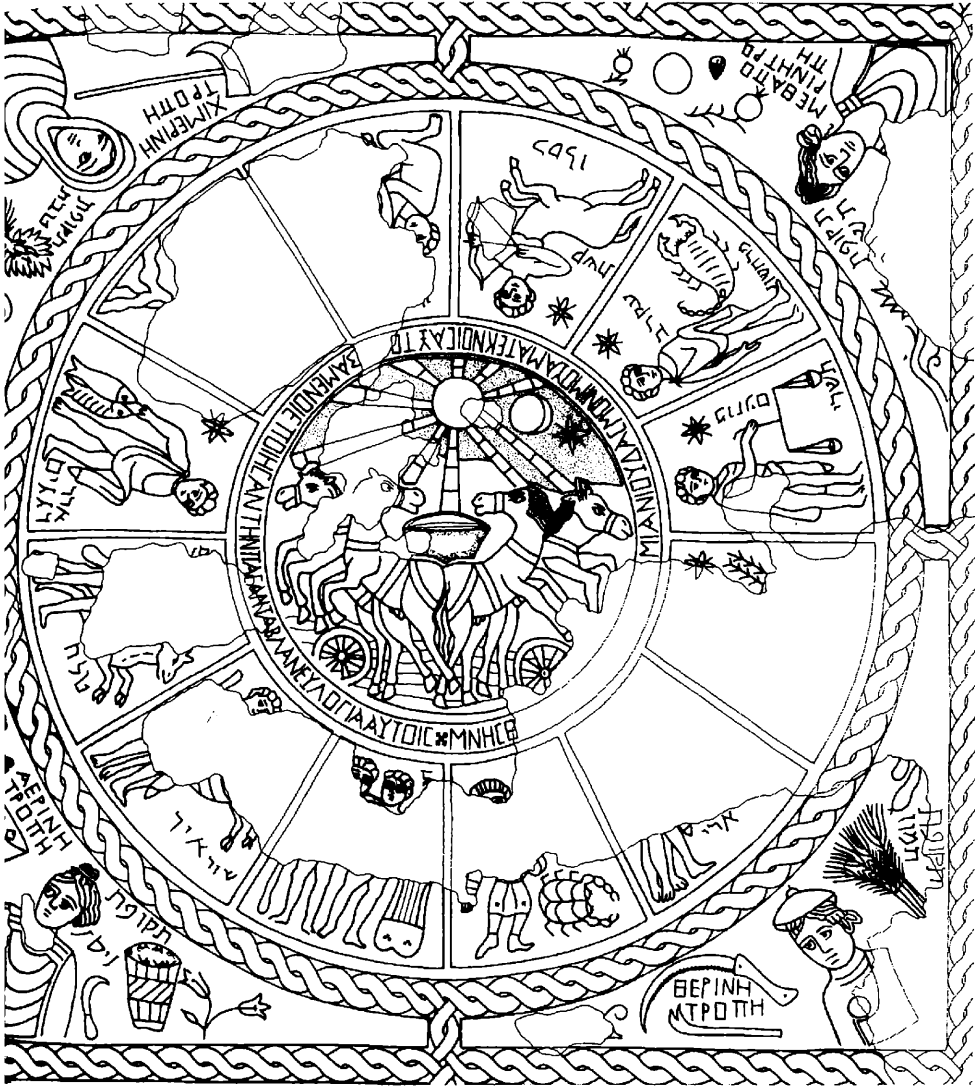


Fig. 22: The sun's chariot at Sepphoris (Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue; Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* [Jerusalem, 2005], k 106, fig. 47).

this particular image in Jewish art in early Byzantium. Did such a solution offer the Jews more security? Not necessarily; the reality in early Byzantium was much more complicated than that. In early Christian writings we often find the image of Christ taking the form of the sun,¹³⁵ and in the late seventh-century mosaic in the *bema* vault in the Koinesis church in Iznik, above the jeweled throne of the Apocalypse bearing a closed gospel, seven rays of light are depicted against a circle of three concentric bands.¹³⁶ At first glance, the depictions at Sepphoris and Iznik appear to be similar, but another look at them reveals some differences: in the Christian mosaic, the rays contain a Latin cross and a dove with a cruciform halo.

I would like to say that the dimension I have just added is not intended to push aside other interpretations of the zodiac's panel. My view on this matter is that the subject retained its almost canonical status for 150 years particularly because it was possible to attribute to it different levels of significance. I find it proper to make such a statement particularly in this context, on account of the dynamics characterizing the study of synagogue mosaics, in which one notes many efforts to advance one interpretation and to push aside another, at a time when there is no contradiction between them, and one explanation can exist side-by-side with the other. There are those who interpret the zodiac accompanied by the four seasons as an expression of the blessing deriving from the divine order of the universe,¹³⁷ others who regard the celestial bodies and the seasons as testimony to the eternal

¹³⁵ On the sun or light as a symbol of Christ in Christian thought, see: F. Dölger, "Das Sonnengleichnis in einer Weihnachtspredigt des Bischofs Zeno von Verona: Christus als wahre und ewige Sonne," in *Antike und Christentum* VI, ed., idem (Münster, 1940), 51–6; E. Kantorowicz, "Oriens Augusti—Lever du Roi," *DOP* 17 (1963): 135–45.

¹³⁶ C. Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, 2002), 63–9; for further bibliography on this mosaic see, idem 63, note 2.

¹³⁷ G. Foerster, "The Zodiac in Ancient Synagogues and its Place in Jewish Thought and Literature," *Eretz-Israel* 19 (1987): 225–34; Weiss, "Sepphoris Synagogue," 231–5. Weiss interprets the theme as an allegory of God's power and centrality in creation. In his view it was legitimate in Jewish society of Late Antiquity to illustrate the power and supremacy of the invisible God in mortal terms, by words or by visual symbol. God is the true *cosmocrator*. Friedman also sees the zodiac, the sun, and the seasons as representing the idea of God the *cosmocrator* and His responsibility for felicity and plenty in the present, as well as the promise of their eternity, resurrection; M. Friedman, "The Meaning of the Zodiac in Synagogues in the Land of Israel during the Byzantine Period," *Ars Judaica* 1 (2005): 51–62.

covenant between God and His people, as is reflected in the literature of the Sages,¹³⁸ yet others who are of the opinion that these decorative themes were intended to depict a liturgical calendar,¹³⁹ some who see it as an expression of the widespread belief in astrology,¹⁴⁰ and scholars who connect this with the publication of the science of fixing the calendar by Hillel II in the second half of the fourth century.¹⁴¹

I hold the opinion that we should pay more attention to the fact that in Sepphoris, as well as in other synagogues, the zodiac was also intended to be a calendaric depiction.¹⁴² Time is an essential component

¹³⁸ Y. Englund, "The Eschatological Significance of the Zodiac Panels in the Mosaic Pavements of Ancient Synagogues in Israel," *Cathedra* 98 (2000): 33–48 (Hebrew); idem, "Mosaics as Midrash: The Zodiacs of the Ancient Synagogues and the Conflict between Judaism and Christianity," *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism; Ancient, Medieval and Modern* 6/2–3 (2003): 189–214.

¹³⁹ M. Avi-Yonah, "The Caesarea Inscription of the 24 Priestly Courses," *Eretz-Israel* 7 (1964): 24–8 (Hebrew); idem, *Art in Ancient Palestine* (Jerusalem, 1981), 396–7; R. Hachlili, "The Zodiac in Ancient Jewish Art: Representation and Significance," *BASOR* 228 (1977): 61–77; idem, "The Zodiac in Ancient Jewish Art: A Review," *JSQ* 9 (2002): 232–7.

¹⁴⁰ A. Ovadiah, "Mosaic Art in Ancient Synagogues in Eretz-Israel," in *Synagogues in Antiquity*, eds., A. Kasher, A. Oppenheimer and U. Rappaport (Jerusalem, 1987), 185–204 (Hebrew); J. Charlesworth, "Jewish Interest in Astrology during the Hellenistic and Roman Period," *ANRW* II.20.2 (1987): 940–9; L. Ness, "Astrology and Judaism in Late Antiquity," *The Ancient World* 26 (1995): 126–33; idem, "Zodiac in the Synagogue," *Journal of Ancient Civilizations* 12 (1997): 81–92; L. Roussin, "The Zodiac in Synagogue Decoration," in *Archaeology and the Galilee: Texts and Contexts in the Greco-Roman and Byzantine Periods*, eds., D. Edwards and C. McCollough, 83–96; B. Kühnel, "Synagogue Floor Mosaic in Sepphoris: Between Paganism and Christianity," in *From Dura Europos to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* 40, eds., L. Levine and Z. Weiss (Portsmouth, 2000), 31–43, 105.

¹⁴¹ A. Sternberg, *The Zodiac of Tiberias* (Tiberias, 1972) (Hebrew); I am of the opinion that Sternberg's proposal, with a small alternation that I shall discuss below, merits acceptance in view of the new dating of the mosaic to the second half of the fourth century. Hammat Tiberias was part of Tiberias, the seat of the Nasi in those days, and the inscription in which Severus boasts that he is "servant of the most illustrious Patriarchs" lends support to this explanation, which relates solely to Hammat Tiberias.

¹⁴² The connection between the zodiac and the Jewish calendar was raised recently by Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 199–205. I agree with his basic claim and furthermore I accept that the zodiac was more than a calendar, but concerning other parts of his discussion I have some reservations. Fine suggests that the zodiac in the synagogues bridges the chasm between the heavenly court (or the dome of heaven) and the synagogue community. Here he locates the vertical orientation between the two realms. However, he ignores the cosmic symbolism of other elements in the furnishing of the synagogue and its decoration. The idea that the liturgy and the liturgical cycle reflect the cosmic order indeed appears in the *piyyutim*, but is not restricted to the zodiac. The cosmic order or the heavenly model is also reflected by the sacred utensils of the Tabernacle and the Temple and by their substitutes in the synagogue. This idea is

in the organization of the framework within which the life of the group functions. It determines the liturgical cycle and is therefore a component of the collective identity. Time that was measured by the movement of celestial bodies was not only of interest to scientists, and already in the Hellenistic period it was presented in various ways in the public domain.¹⁴³ The Roman calendars regulated the rhythm of religious and social events in the lives of Roman citizens and were a means of defining Roman identity.¹⁴⁴

The Christians' great interest in questions relating to time as part of the consolidation of their identity was already notable at the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.), at which it was decided that Christians would no longer be dependent on the Jewish calendar for determining the date of Easter. The practice of the Quartodecimani of observing Easter on the fourteenth day of Nisan, i.e., the day of the Jewish Passover, was declared heretical. This decision was motivated primarily by the desire to ensure liturgical unity, but it also involved taking a stand with regard to Jews. The Christians sought to cut themselves off from the inaccurate Jewish calendar.¹⁴⁵

The appearance of the zodiac as the central motif in the mosaic floor of synagogues is a declaration of adherence to the Jewish calendar. In Judaism as well, great importance was attributed to timing, which determined the morning and evening prayers, observance of the

expressed *inter alia* in the *Qerovah* of Yannai for Numbers 8 in which the menorah serves as the earthly counterpart of the heavenly bodies. Moreover, one should not ignore the appearance of the seasons as an essential and permanent part of the composition of the zodiac in the synagogues. The seasons, to my understanding, signify the terrestrial area. The vertical orientation between the two realms is no less indicated by the depiction of the *'Aqedah* or by the panel of the sacred utensils.

¹⁴³ One impressive example is the Horologion of Andronicos from Kyrrhos (in Macedonia), which stood next to the Roman agora in Athens and is presently known as "The Tower of the Winds." Another example from the same period time is the frieze which was incorporated in secondary use in the facade of the Hagios Eleutherios Church in Athens. The frieze includes the signs of the zodiac, the four seasons of the year, personifications of the months, and a reference to typical human activity, emphasizing religious festivals. We do not know from which building the relief was taken, but in all likelihood it was a public building.

¹⁴⁴ M. Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1990).

¹⁴⁵ S. Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, Second Century B.C.–Tenth Century C.E.* (Oxford, 2001), 67–9, 80–4, 125–6, 222–5; I. J. Yuval, "Two Nations in Your Womb," *Perceptions of Jews and Christians* (Berkeley, 2006), 75–7.

Sabbath, and the ceremonies connected with the festivals.¹⁴⁶ The ways of sanctification of the new moon and intercalation of the year are mentioned in halakhic literature. The *tanna*, Rabbi Eleazar of Modiin, insisted that desecrators of the Sabbath and festivals and all sanctity, violators of the covenant of Abraham, could have no part in the world to come, even if they had virtuous deeds to their credit. Rabbi Eleazar's statement reflected his antagonistic reaction to the early Christian preachments to the Gentiles of the supreme importance of charity—preachments characterized by a deprecatory attitude toward all the commandments of Scripture, aside from the injunctions to give charity and act with loving kindness.¹⁴⁷

The supremacy of the sun and the appearance of the zodiac at Ham-math Tiberias (dated to the third quarter of the fourth century) and later on in other synagogues reflects a major change that occurred in Jewish calendar reckoning in the fourth century. As indicated by Sacha Stern, from the Talmudic sources we learn that in that period new calendrical rules were introduced in addition to the more empirical rules that appeared in the Mishna or Tosefta. These additional rules reduced the flexibility of the empirical system and were a major step toward the formation of a fixed calendar.¹⁴⁸ One of these rules is the rule of vernal equinox that is attested in a single passage of the Babylonian Talmud (Rosh ha-Shanah 21 a). This rule was sent to Rava (early or mid-fourth century) from Palestine: "R. Huna b. Avin sent to Rava: If you see the winter season prolonging itself till the sixteenth of Nisan, intercalate that year and do not worry, for it is written: 'Observe the month of 'aviv (Deut. 16:1)—observe the 'aviv of *tequfah*, that it occur in the month of Nisan.'" From Tosefta Sanhedrin 2:2 we may infer that the Hebrew term *tequfah* is equivalent to equinox.¹⁴⁹ The rule of the equinox is an astronomical phenomenon that is clearly connected with the solar year and does not depend on agriculture. In the depictions of the zodiac at Hammat Tiberias and at Sepphoris (beginning of the fifth century), there is full accord between the vernal equinox (*tequfah* of 'aviv) and the sign of Aries or the month Nisan, and this

¹⁴⁶ E.g.: BT Shabbat 75a.

¹⁴⁷ Mishna, Avot 3, 11; BT *Makkoth* 23, a; BT *Pesahim* 118, a: "Again, R. Shesheth said on the authority of R. Eleazar b. 'Azariah: He who despises the Festivals is as though he engaged in idolatry."

¹⁴⁸ Stern, *Calender and Community*, 70–1, 164–75.

¹⁴⁹ "The year may be intercalated on three grounds: 'aviv, fruits of trees, and the *tequfah*. On two of these grounds it should be intercalated, but not on one of them."

was possibly intended to indicate the recognition of that rule. Nevertheless, the detailed depiction of the seasons of the year shows not only how the celestial elements were responsible for seasonal changes but also reflects an approach that time reckoning is based not only on astronomic observations but also on the state of nature.

The reason for the gradual process that led to a predicted and calculated calendar, as claimed by Stern, was to enable Palestinian and Diaspora communities to observe the festivals on the same dates.¹⁵⁰ Stern indicates that by the fourth century fixed calendars that took into account the equinox rule became well established in Christian communities, but he doubts to what extent Christians calendars had an influence over the Rabbinic Jewish calendar at that time. My claim is that we should not ignore this parallelism. There is a possibility that the rabbis were influenced by the changes in the Christian calendar, but were not imitating it. On the contrary, the change in the calendar was needed to better confront external pressures from Christians, who, from the beginning of the fourth century, started to blame the Jews for incorrect reckoning.¹⁵¹ The initial appearance of the zodiac, particularly in a synagogue connected with circles of the Nasi, is therefore unsurprising. There was a real threat of diversity in calendrical practices among the Jewish communities. The reckoning of time was an expertise reserved for the Nasi, up to the time of the abolition of the office of the Nasi at the start of the fifth century. According to the sources: "Our Rabbis taught: A year cannot be intercalated unless the Nasi sanctions it" (TB, *Sanhedrin* 11, 1). The punctiliousness in denoting the names of the zodiacal signs and, at Sepphoris, also the months as well as the names of the seasons of the year (in both Hebrew and Greek), is indicative of the desire to declare that this is the Hebrew calendar.

¹⁵⁰ Stern, *Calendar and Community*, 211–63.

¹⁵¹ Even within Judaism there was tension between the adherents of the luni-solar calendar and the solar one. The disputes on this issue in the last centuries of the Second Temple period are well reflected in the secessionist priesthood literature that was found in Qumran and in the apocrypha and pseudoepigraphia of the Old Testament. Late controversies are reflected in the *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* literature (dated between the second and eighth century C.E.). This topic is surveyed at length by R. Eilior, *Temple and Chariot, Priests and Angels, Sanctuary and Heavenly Sanctuaries in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem, 2002) (Hebrew). One should take into account the possibility that there was a threat that the adoption of the solar calendar by the dominant Christian culture might affect the inner conflicts.

The lack of accord between the seasons and the months in the other five mosaics has been understood by scholars as an expression of the artists' negligence, their lack of understanding, and the fact that these were decorative and not scientific depictions. My opinion on this matter is that this was the way in which the designers of the mosaics denoted that the calendar appearing in synagogues was a luni-solar one based also on observation of the stars. Since in a solar calendar such a deviation could not come about, the lack of accord that we see in these depictions emphasizes that this is a luni-solar calendar. The sun is dominant in all depictions of the zodiac, but next to it always appear the new moon and a star. The Jewish calendar was one that was determined anew each time, and its greatness lay in the fact that it gave the Jewish leadership the authority to determine the festival times. This is well attested in the liturgical poetry of Yannai: "The sun; how can it bear witness [to the new month] alone? When one witness is not enough [for a court] to inflict the death penalty."¹⁵² Unlike me, Magness is of the opinion that the depicted calendar is the solar one, and she does not explain her interpretation of the lack of accord between the seasons and the months.¹⁵³

One of the roles that the synagogues took over from the ruined Temple was to observe Jewish time. The rabbinic court of Palestine had a monopoly over calendrical decisions in Late Antiquity and the Jews in the Diaspora followed their determinations. There is also a possibility that the appearance of the zodiac and the seasons reflects the local pride of the Palestinian communities.

VI. IDENTIFYING SYMBOLS

My last remark concerns the issue of the exclusiveness of certain symbols, and comes in response to certain claims made by Jaś Elsner in a thought-provoking article he published in the *Journal of Roman Studies* in 2003.¹⁵⁴ Elsner maintains that Jewish symbols such as the menorah and Torah shrine were not necessarily used exclusively by

¹⁵² This poem was recited on Rosh Hashanah eve; English translation by Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 188.

¹⁵³ Magness, "Heaven on Earth," 1–52.

¹⁵⁴ J. Elsner, "Archaeologies and Agendas: Reflections on Late Ancient Jewish Art and Early Christian Art," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 93 (2003): 114–28.

the Jews, and therefore it is not clear whether Judaism or Christianity were exclusive religious categories prior to the fifth century. The most significant piece of evidence he uses is the gold glass with Jewish imagery that was found in the catacombs of St. Marcellinus and St. Peter in Rome, a site that is usually classified as Christian. My counterclaim is that he places too much weight on this minor portable object and that he must make a distinction between the behavior of individuals and the typical attitude of a religious or ethnic group.

In the synagogue of Dura-Europos, dated to the mid-third century, the seven-branched candelabrum and the sacred architectural façade are already depicted in a place on which full attention was focused, and in the synagogue at Hammat Tiberias, from the last quarter of the fourth century, at the foot of the *bema* of the Holy Ark, a panel with the sacred utensils in a form that would become a canonic formula for close to 200 years appears. At that very same time, there appeared in the catacomb of Via Torolonia a rather similar composition made up of almost the same elements.¹⁵⁵ The synchronized appearance of the sacred utensils in this format such a distance apart in the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire indicates that this iconography was well known to many Jewish communities.

I hope that I have managed to show how Jewish art and Christian art were largely co-constructed in parallel during Late Antiquity and that in addition to the internal Jewish or Christian discourse, the art of the synagogue or the church also responded to an external challenge perhaps unknowingly fostered by the sister faith.

¹⁵⁵ G. Noga-Banai, "Between the Menorot: New Light on a Fourth-Century Jewish Representative Composition," *Viator* 39/2 (2008): 21–48.

JUDAISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF BYZANTINE ART

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This undertaking—to consider the Jewish contribution to the development of the Christian artistic tradition—requires a bit of an explanation in 2011. Although the subject has long been a focus of scholarly interest, the study of Judaism’s relationship to pagan and especially Christian art has been attacked, during the past decade or so, as inherently “orientalist” and even “anti-Semitic.” To be sure, recent studies on Late Antique Jewish art, the work of Jaś Elsner in particular have correctly refocused attention on the immediate contexts in which surviving Jewish monuments can profitably be studied.¹ Other scholarship examined the historiographical questions with subtlety and intelligence, casting a clarifying light on the intellectual and political forces that have directed the study itself.² The glibness of certain revisionist writing is hardly conducive to serious discussion, however, such as Annabel Wharton’s dismissal of James Henry Breasted’s *The Oriental Forerunner of Byzantine Art* as “historical sabotage”;³ and the tone of such a-historical polemics should not be allowed to scare off scholars interested in questions other than “the Jewish content of ancient Jewish art,”⁴ however important, indeed central, that issue may be.

Any consideration of Judaism’s place in the history of Byzantine art must still begin with the synagogue at Dura Europos.⁵ Despite the

¹ J. Elsner, “Archaeologies and Agendas: Reflections on Late Ancient Jewish Art and Early Christian Art,” *Journal of Roman Studies*, 93 (2003): 114–28.

² C. Soussloff, *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History* (Berkeley, 1999); M. Olin, *A Nation Without Art* (Omaha, 2001); H. Claman, *Jewish Images in the Christian Church. Art as the Mirror of the Jewish-Christian Conflict 200–1250 C.E.* (Mercer University Press, 2000).

³ A. Wharton, “Good and Bad Images from the Synagogue of Dura Europos: Contexts, Subtexts, and Intertexts,” *Art History* 17 (1994): 1–25.

⁴ S. Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge, 2005), 4.

⁵ On the vast literature, cf. C. Kraeling, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: The Synagogue* (Final Report, VIII, pt. I) (New Haven, 1956); J. Gutmann, “Early Synagogue and Jewish Catacomb Art and its Relation to Christian Art,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Vol. 120 (Berlin, 1984), 1313–42; K. Weitzmann and H. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies, Vol. 28)

remarkable finds in Eretz Israel during the three-quarters of a century since it was unearthed, the extraordinary painted assembly hall on the banks of the Euphrates remains the keystone in the construction of a history of medieval Jewish art, and in turn, of its impact on later Christian tradition. Even before the synagogue was excavated, Breasted had prepared a foundation for Dura's centrality when he related the flat, hieratic style of the paintings in the pagan temples to what he perceived to be the most salient features of Byzantine art, stretching the line of descent all the way to the *maniera greca* of fourteenth-century Tuscany.⁶ No one would be so bold today to repeat Breasted's hypothesis that painters in Dura

after the disappearance of Palmyra, would easily accept Christianity... and following the same traditions in style, technique, and composition, the successors... must have the virgin, the Savior, the apostles, the great Church Fathers, and the newly converted sovereigns, precisely as we have them in the mosaics of Ravenna, which are the lineal descendants of these mural paintings of ancient Dura.⁷

To the extent that they seem valid at all, such stylistic similarities would now be understood as a common heritage from Sassanian typologies, or more broadly, from what Ernst Kitzinger long ago termed "sub-antique" art, that is Roman classicism reinterpreted through diverse, indigenous traditions.⁸

By introducing the notion of a direct relationship between the Dura paintings and later Christian art, however, Breasted's book prepared the way for connections to be made between the Jewish subjects discovered in the Dura synagogue and the great tradition of painting that was to emerge in Constantinople and the Byzantine territories. In the report of the sixth season of excavations published in 1936, Carl Kraeling wrote that the Dura synagogue suggests that Christian

(Washington, DC, 1990); R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora* (Leiden, 1998); O. Irshai, "Synagogue," in *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément* (Paris, 2003), fasc. 74, cols. 750–68; Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 172–83 et passim.

⁶ J. Breasted, *Oriental Fore-Runners of Byzantine Painting; First-Century Wall Paintings from the Fortress of Dura on the Middle Euphrates* (Chicago, 1924); in this, he was elaborating ideas first set forth systematically by J. Strzygowski in *Orient oder Rom* (Leipzig, 1901), though Breasted did not cite the work.

⁷ Breasted, *Oriental Fore-Runners*, 73.

⁸ E. Kitzinger, *Early Medieval Art* (London, 1940).

art may have originated from a Jewish tradition;⁹ and the excavation's supervisor Michael Rostovtzeff could declare in his 1937 lectures that "we may trace the influence of the religious art of Dura in many compositions of the late Imperial and early Byzantine religious art."¹⁰ Two years later, the theory was so well established that the impressive albeit provincial Jewish paintings were linked, not only in style but also in their iconographies and compositional dispositions, to such monuments of Byzantine tradition as the Chludov Psalter, *Sacra Parallela*, the Paris Psalter, the Octateuchs, manuscripts of the *Christian Topography*, Octateuchs, and the Florence Book of Kings.¹¹ Already in his introduction to Comte du Mesnil du Buisson's comprehensive study of synagogue, the great French Byzantinist Gabriel Millet would write:

Le choix et l'ordonnance des sujets, dans les anciennes églises chrétiennes, en particulier dans les églises byzantines, sont déterminées par quelques règles constantes... En était-il de même à Doura?¹²

The perception has persisted and even been expanded in modern scholarship, particularly in the work of Kurt Weitzmann.¹³ William Tronzo, for example, cited the Dura synagogue in his study of the Via Latina catacomb paintings, precious evidence of third-century Christian art, albeit in Rome;¹⁴ and Weitzmann elaborated the relationship between the Dura synagogue paintings and Byzantine manuscripts.¹⁵

Because the Dura synagogue had been completely buried during a Sassanian siege in 256, the logical conclusion reached by adherents of this theory was that the paintings in provincial Dura must have drawn on a rich tradition of Jewish art that had originated in a major center such as Antioch, whence it ultimately nourished the germination of Christian art. While comprehending certain apparent compositional

⁹ C. Kraeling, *Excavations at Dura-Europos, Sixth Season, 1932-33* (New Haven, 1936), 383.

¹⁰ M. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and its Art* (Oxford, 1938), 111.

¹¹ Cf. C. du Mesnil du Buisson, *Les peintures de la synagogue de Doura-Europos 245-56* (Rome, 1939).

¹² G. Millet, *Peintures de la synagogue* (Rome, 1939), XXII.

¹³ Cf. "Die Illustration der Septuaginta," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 3/4 (1952/53), 96-120; trans. in *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, ed. H. Kessler (Chicago, 1971), 45-75 and "Zur Frage des Einflusses jüdischer Bilderquellen auf die Illustration des Alten Testaments," *Mullus. Festschrift für Theodor Klauser* (Münster, 1964), 401-15; trans. in *Studies*, 76-95.

¹⁴ W. Tronzo, *The Via Latina Catacomb: Imitation and Discontinuity in Fourth-Century Roman Painting* (University Park, 1986).

¹⁵ Weitzman, *Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue*.

parallels, the theory rests largely on midrashic details that elaborate the narrative in the synagogue paintings and recur in later Christian works.¹⁶ The theory has been widely accepted;¹⁷ but it has also been strongly criticized.¹⁸ According to the skeptics, the Jewish elements identifiable in Christian art were derived not from Jewish pictures, but from Christian exegesis that had incorporated rabbinical commentaries. Notwithstanding the fact that to a certain extent at least, this objection seems to have been generated by a residual reluctance by some scholars to accept the existence of an important Jewish artistic culture in Late Antiquity, the claim that the ostensible relationship between Jewish and Christian iconography derives from oral lore or written sources merits consideration.

Ironically, by emphasizing the midrashic component in the Dura synagogue paintings, critics of the scholarly examination of Jewish sources of Christian art such as Wharton and Fine actually reinforce the need to undertake just such an examination. To the extent that rabbinical features in works of art are considered characteristically Jewish, they demand an even more nuanced analysis when they appear in Christian works.

The textual transmission of midrashim is itself very complicated, making the adjudication among the various arguments difficult. Some of the "early" Jewish legends, for instance, were written down only late in the Middle Ages, raising the possibility of more fluid oral sources behind the art. Moreover, because there is virtually no overlap between the rabbinical features actually found in the Dura paintings and in later Christian representations, precise test cases are scant. The best example is the scene of the rescue of Moses from the Nile, which at Dura,

¹⁶ Cf. Weitzmann, "Illustration der Septuaginta," in *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity*, eds., H. Schreckenberg and K. Schubert, (Assen, 1992).

¹⁷ Schreckenberg and Schubert, *Jewish Historiography and Iconography*; G. Sed-Rajna, *L'art juif* (Paris, 1995).

¹⁸ H. Strauss, *Die Kunst der Juden im Wandel der Zeit und Umwelt: Das Judenproblem im Spiegel der Kunst* (Tübingen, 1972); R. Stichel, "Ausserkanonische Elemente in byzantinischen Illustrationen des Alten Testaments," *Römische Quartalschrift* 69 (1974): 159–81 and "Gab es eine Illustration der jüdischen Heiligen Schrift in der Antike?," in *Tesserae. Festschrift für Josef Engemann* (Münster, 1991) 93–111; Wharton, "Good and Bad Images;" B. Kühnel, "Jewish and Christian Art in the Middle Ages: The Dynamics of a Relationship," in *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge*, ed. A. Haverkamp (Sigmaringen, 1999), 1–15; and Weitzmann's collaborator, Massimo Bernabò, in K. Weitzmann and M. Bernabò, *The Illustrations in Manuscripts of the Septuagint* Vol. II. *Octateuch* (Princeton, 1999), esp. 322–23.

in the Byzantine Octateuchs, and in late medieval Latin manuscripts all portray Pharaoh's daughter with her hand stretched out toward the child in the basket, in accord with the *Targum Onkelos* and other rabbinical texts.¹⁹ As critics have pointed out, however, even if they follow the same extra-biblical account, the depictions exhibit no significant formal connection.²⁰ Moreover, even when such extra-biblical features analogous to those in Dura as the naked woman fetching the child from the Nile appears in later Jewish art, as in the fourteenth-century Golden Haggadah (London, Brit. Lib., MS Add. 27210, fol. 9) and its sister manuscript (London, Brit. Lib., MS Or. 2884, fol. 12r), a derivation from a Late Antique pictorial model is difficult to support.²¹ Continuity through literary sources does seem much more likely than artistic descent.

Scholars are thus left to study midrashic features in Christian works without counterparts at Dura. The much-discussed depiction of Phinehas killing Zimri and Cozbi (Num. 25.10–15) in the Via Latina Catacomb in Rome and later Byzantine and Latin illuminated manuscripts provides an instructive example. As in the case of the Moses rescued from the Nile, careful analysis of the various witnesses does not support the existence of “an iconographic model originally inspired by rabbinical sources.”²² Quite the contrary. Not only is the pictorial tradition—beginning with the Via Latina Catacomb itself—Christian and possibly explained by Christian paraphrases of the Book of Numbers,²³ but the one Jewish exception in the Hebrew Kennicott

¹⁹ U. Schubert, “Die Auffindung des Moses knaben im Nil durch die Pharaontochter sowie die Darstellung der vierten Plage in den beiden Pamplona-Bibeln im Licht der jüdischen Ikonographie,” *Aachener Kunstblätter* 60 (1994): 285–92; Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Illustration der Septuaginta*.

²⁰ Schreckenberg and Schubert, *Jewish Historiography and Iconography*, 205–6.

²¹ B. Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah: A Fourteenth-Century Illuminated Hebrew Manuscript in the British Museum* (London, 1970); J. Gutmann, “The Testing of Moses: A Comparative Study in Christian, Muslim and Jewish Art,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, n.s., 2 (1988): 107–17; K. Kogman-Appel, “The Sephardic Picture Cycles and the Rabbinic Tradition: Continuity and Innovation in Jewish Iconography,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 60 (1997): 451–81; see also K. Kogman-Appel and S. Laderman, “The Sarajevo Haggadah—The Concept of *Creatio ex nihilo* and the Hermeneutical School Behind It,” *Studies in Iconography* (2004): 89–128.

²² *un modello iconografico ispirato originariamente a fonti rabbiniche*. A. Contessa, “Pinhas, lo zelante. Un personaggio problematico nell'arte cristiana,” in *Raccontare dio. Il Midrash e la tradizione di Israele*, ed. Raffaello Zini (Reggio Emilia, 2002), 115–59.

²³ The key detail of Phinehas holding the fornicating couple atop his raised sword might simply be a literal rendering of such contemporary Christian paraphrases as

Bible of 1239 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Kennicott 1, fol. 92r) also differs from medieval iconography. Most important, direct rabbinical participation is documented in the most impressive witness, the fifteenth-century Alba Bible (Madrid, Palazzo Liria). The Franciscan designers of the manuscript had engaged the learned Rabbi Moses Arragel of Guadalajara to advise the illuminators and he is actually portrayed twice at the beginning of the book.²⁴ Indeed, the rabbinical commentary actually is transcribed alongside the depiction. Jewish involvement is also indicated for the Padua Bible which contains text in Hebrew and the names of owners of Jewish extraction,²⁵ and it is possible also in the case of the Pamplona Bibles, made for Sancho el Fuerte who had integrated Jews into his army.²⁶ Rather than assuming that "the legend [had] been illustrated in the Jewish art of Late Antiquity [and was] influenced not only by the text of the commentary, but also by a then extant Jewish model,"²⁷ the evidence of the Phinehas episode suggests instead successive interventions by Jewish advisors; and that is supported by differences in the details of costume and compositions in the several witnesses that preserve the midrashic features.

The key question, it seems to me, is not the origin of an extra-biblical detail in itself, but rather its function within a specific context. For instance, the interpolation of Hiel into the scene of Elijah and the Baalite priests at Dura not only engages a Jewish legend incorporated into the *Yalkut Simoni* but it also serves the clear purpose of dramatizing gentile perfidy, and in turn, Jehovah's powerful support of the Chosen People in exile among pagans, a theme common to other subjects in the synagogue and appropriate for a congregation on the Roman marches.²⁸ On the other hand, Phinehas's wrath against the sinners

that of Lucifer, Bishop of Cagliari, "Phinees sacerdos, propterea vel maxime quod gladio idololatrie media in synagoga interemerit" or Augustine's "quis autem utriuslibet sexus homo non mallet gladio trucidari, etiam illo modo quo trucidavit sacerdos Phinees fornicarios."

²⁴ C.-O. Nordstrom, *The Duke of Alba's Castillian Bible* (Uppsala, 1967).

²⁵ Cf. *Bibbia istoriata Padovana della fine del Trecento*, ed. G. Folena and G. Mellini (Venice, 1962), XI-XII.

²⁶ F. Bucher, *The Pamplona Bibles* (New Haven, 1970), 6 et passim.

²⁷ Nordstrom, *Duke of Alba's Castillian Bible*, 118; Schreckenberg and Schubert maintain that the episode "demonstrates that Jewish figurative art was one of the sources from which early Christian painting benefitted," *Jewish Historiography and Iconography*, 209.

²⁸ Kraeling, *Excavations*, 137ff.; Weitzmann and Kessler, *Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue*, 110-14. Wharton's point that a given subject pictured at Dura might acquire various meanings depending on the "reader/viewer" (19) is well taken, but one must

in the Christian context is sufficiently explained by Psalm 106.30–31: “Phinehas stood up and interceded, so the plague stopped. This was counted to him as righteousness throughout all generations forever.” In the Via Latina catacomb, the subject can thus be understood as an example of God’s protection of the righteous, of the same sort as the nearby representations as the Raising of Lazarus and Christ Healing the Woman with an Issue of Blood.

These examples support the more complex genealogical relationship between Jewish and Christian medieval art recently proposed by several scholars.²⁹ In his studies of the fifth-century Samson mosaic at Mopsuestia (Misis)³⁰ and other early Byzantine works, Rainer Stichel has underscored the need to consider the question of art in the broader context of Jewish-Christian relationships during Late Antiquity. On the one hand, the scenes from the life of Samson are accompanied by inscriptions from the Septuagint, which are themselves infiltrated with midrashic elements; on the other, it is unclear whether the building was a synagogue or a church. In a particularly compelling recent essay, Jaś Elsner has broadened the perspective further, maintaining that the issue of Jewish/Christian art might be productively seen more generally in terms of “inter-cult” fluidity within a pluralistic Late Antique Roman culture, rather than as a linear evolution.³¹ Pointing to the indeterminate religious origin of many early objects, he suggests that the shared imagery is best interpreted as elements in a strategy of asserting simultaneously “a gesture of affirmation of a specific cult community and a sign that excluded other cults which were not one’s own” within Rome’s “increasing tendency toward establishing its own religious universalism in the third century.” The magnificent textile in the Abegg Stiftung in Riggisberg painted with scenes from Jewish

also reckon with the possibility that the juxtaposition of events would have provoked that very same reader/viewer to find a commonality (or as she suggests several “possible restorations”) among the various depicted themes.

²⁹ Cf. my own contribution, “Program and Structure,” to Weitzmann and Kessler, *Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue* and also “The Sapphoris Mosaic and Christian Art,” *Journal of Greek and Roman Studies*, Supplement Volume 40 (2000): 64–72; and Kühnel, “Jewish and Christian Art.”

³⁰ L. Budde, *Antike Mosaiken in Kilikien I* (Recklinghausen, 1969); E. Kitzinger, “Observations on the Samson Floor at Mopsuestia,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 27 (1973): 133–44; R. Stichel, “Die Inschriften des Samson-Mosaiks in Mopsuestia und ihre Beziehung zum biblischen Text,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 71 (1978): 50–61 and “Gab es eine Illustration,” 110–1.

³¹ Elsner, “Archaeologies and Agendas.”

scripture offers another instance; produced a century or more after the Peace of the Church, its precise sectarian status is not easily established.³² The structuring of the historic narratives around a focal niche in the Dura synagogue as in the Christian building supports Elsner's basic claim that the apparent similarity between Jewish and Christian imagery is part of a dynamic process of Jewish-Christian interaction. The disposition of the architectural decoration surely derives from pagan models of a great range of purposes.³³ Precedents exist at Dura itself, farther away (and later) in the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias and in the Tetrachic cult room in Luxor, and even in the Mithraic context that intrigues Elsner so much.

What distinguishes the synagogue from the surviving pagan works, however, and for that matter also from the baptistry in the Dura Christian building, is clear evidence that the Jewish paintings had a pedagogical rather than (strictly) cultic purpose.³⁴ Drawing on sacred history, they were intended to remind the Jewish congregation of its God's protection and promises and—as graffiti attest—also to introduce the faithful to gentile visitors. Only one of the narratives bears clearly on the future: the abstract depiction of Jerusalem; and it speaks of the promised restoration of the real city. Furthermore, as I have argued, the pictured stories may have been designed to counter Christian claims that the events of Hebrew Scripture were to be understood allegorically and had been superseded by a new covenant. It is especially interesting, then, that while the Via Latina catacomb from a century later is also rich in “extra-biblical” details, the extensive vocabulary of scenes from Hebrew Scripture is used there in a characteristically Christian fashion. As Tronzo has demonstrated, Joshua

³² Cf. L. Kötzsche, *Der bemalte Behang in der Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg. Eine alttestamentliche Bildfolge des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Riggisberg, 2004), 219.

³³ In “Program and Structure” I make the point that “in organizing lateral narratives around central symbols and effigies, the Durene paintings were adapting to their own use contemporary systems for adorning cult rooms. In the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, the Diocletianic frescoes at Luxor, and at Dura itself—the Mithraeum, for instance—portraits and symbols occupy the focal walls, and flanking areas are covered with narratives. Jewish use of the basic scheme may, in itself, be taken as a conscious attempt to signal the status of the assembly hall as a religious cult room” (174). Wharton misreads this argument when she writes: “Having fashioned the Synagogue's decoration in a form familiar from medieval church programming, the author points to the structural resemblance between this arrangement and the decorations of San Paolo Fuori le Mura and Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome” (“Synagogue of Dura Europos,” 7).

³⁴ Wharton, “Synagogue of Dura Europos,” 20; Fine, *Art & Judaism*, 180.

Entering the Holy Land is to be read as a type of Jesus leading the saved into paradise and is actually opposed there to Moses Receiving the Laws. Elsner's subtle argument may, therefore, be further refined. Within the general context he describes, Jews and Christians were not only carving out their own identities but were also competing with each other in an attempt to keep their own adherents and to attract others. Art was a useful tool for each sect (and groups within each) to stake out a particular interpretation of the Scripture it held in common with the others.³⁵ Thus, although the decoration of Samaritan synagogues shares features (and possibly even artists) with their Jewish counterparts, the strict adherence to the Mosaic prohibition of figural pictures sets it apart from the art of its rivals.³⁶

The fact that the Temple and the Ark of the Covenant are the most commonly-shared elements in Late Antique Jewish and Christian monuments is, in this context, not surprising. As emblems of messianic hope and promises of political restoration, they had become central symbols in Jewish and Samaritan art following the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 A.D.³⁷ The Temple facade appeared as a sign of political aspirations on the coins of Bar Kochba, and depicted above the Torah shrine at Dura, it provided a focus for prayer. If Elsner is correct, the tabernacle/temple together with its menorah and *vasa sacra* may also have been adopted by Christians at an early date; the fourth-century rendering on a gold glass in the Museo Sacro labelled "House of Peace" he points out, was found in the Christian catacomb of Marcellinus and Pietro (Fig. 1).³⁸ Consistent with other subjects painted on the catacomb walls, the image of God's house would have served the funereal context. In various forms, the tabernacle/temple also dominated synagogue mosaic pavements of the fifth and sixth centuries. The fifth-century synagogue mosaic at Sepphoris, for instance, features

³⁵ Cf. L. Levine, "Contextualizing Jewish Art: The Synagogues at Hammat Tiberias and Sepphoris," in *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire*, eds., R. Kamlin and S. Schwartz (Louvain, 2003), 91–131.

³⁶ I. Magen, "Samaritan Synagogues," *Qadmoniot* 25 (1993): 66–90.

³⁷ É. Revel-Neher, *Le signe de la rencontre. L'arche d'alliance dans l'art juif et chrétien du second au dixième siècles* (Paris, 1984) and *Le témoignage de l'absence. Les objets du sanctuaire à byzance et dans l'art juif du XI^e au XV^e siècles* (Paris, 1998).

³⁸ A. St. Clair, "God's House of Peace in Paradise: the Feast of Tabernacles on a Jewish Gold Glass," *Jewish Art* 11 (1985): 6–15; H. Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity," *Kairos. Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie*, 32/33 (1990/1991): 53–77; Elsner, "Archaeologies and Agendas," 115–7.

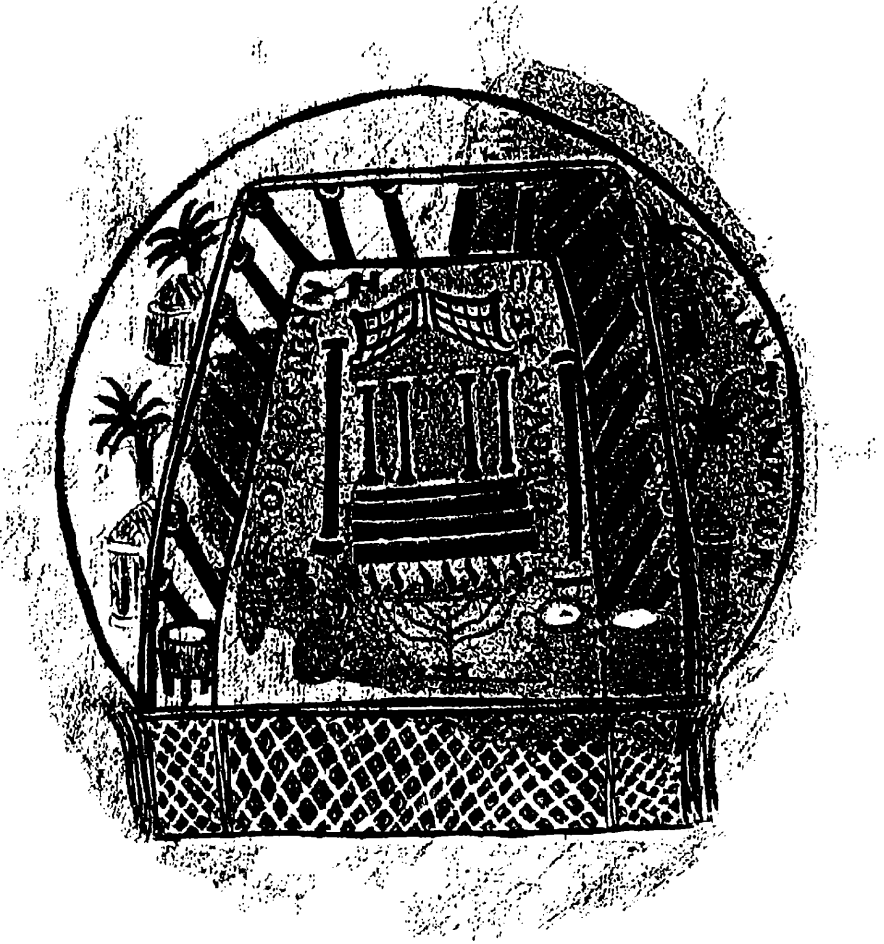


Fig. 1: Tabernacle, gold glass, Vatican, Museo Sacro (reconstruction by author).

a pedimented Temple with closed paneled doors, not unlike that of the Vatican glass, flanked by the menoroth and other temple utensils, and directly below, Aaron's tabernacle with its sacrifices (Fig. 2).³⁹ Morphologically, the composition is like that above Arcosolium IV in the Villa Torlonia catacomb in Rome;⁴⁰ as Zeev Weiss has shown, these have a multivalent significance, connecting messianic longings and the earthly abundance promised in cultic observance.⁴¹

In these and other representations, reference was surely intended also to pagan temples. The Bar Kochba coin belongs to a Roman tradition of representing cult buildings; even the railing in front of the temple has parallels in (later) Roman issues.⁴² At Dura, the association is explicit in the scene of the Ark in the land of the Philistines directly to the left of the depiction of the Jerusalem temple and its tabernacle counterpart (Fig. 3), which demonstrates Jehovah's power over the pagan god Dagon, worshiped in an aedicula housing cult statues.⁴³ Indeed, with its arched two-door Ark set within a six-column pedimented structure, the temple in Sepphoris seems to be a composite of the Ark of the Covenant and the pagan temple as found in the Dura panel. The image on the Bar Kochba coin and depictions on other synagogue floors, such as that of the Samaritan synagogue from Beth Shean, also depict the Holy of Holies within the portal of the temple. Especially when seen against analogous Roman coins,⁴⁴ the purpose may have been to affirm the article of faith that the God of the Jews is invested, not in images, but in the sacred ark and its services. Elsner's basic claim would then be supported that "none of these religious arts is independent of the others. Indeed, the iconographies and visual strategies of any one cult are a complex mixture of structural

³⁹ Cf. Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue: Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* (Jerusalem, 2005).

⁴⁰ H. Beyer and H. Lietzmann, *Die jüdische Katakombe der Villa Torlonia in Rom* (Berlin, 1930); Revel-Neher, *Le signe*, 99–102 et passim.

⁴¹ *Sepphoris Synagogue*, 235–9.

⁴² J. Branham, "Sacred Space under Erasure in Ancient Synagogues and Early Churches," *Art Bulletin* 74 (1992): 375–94. Cf. D. Barag, "New Evidence for the Identification of the Showbread Table on the Coins of the Bar Kokhba War," *Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Numismatics* (London, 1986), 217–22.

⁴³ Cf. J. Elsner, "Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image: The Case of Dura Europos," *Classical Philology* 96 (2001): 269–304.

⁴⁴ Cf. Branham, "Sacred Space," Figs. 3 and 4.

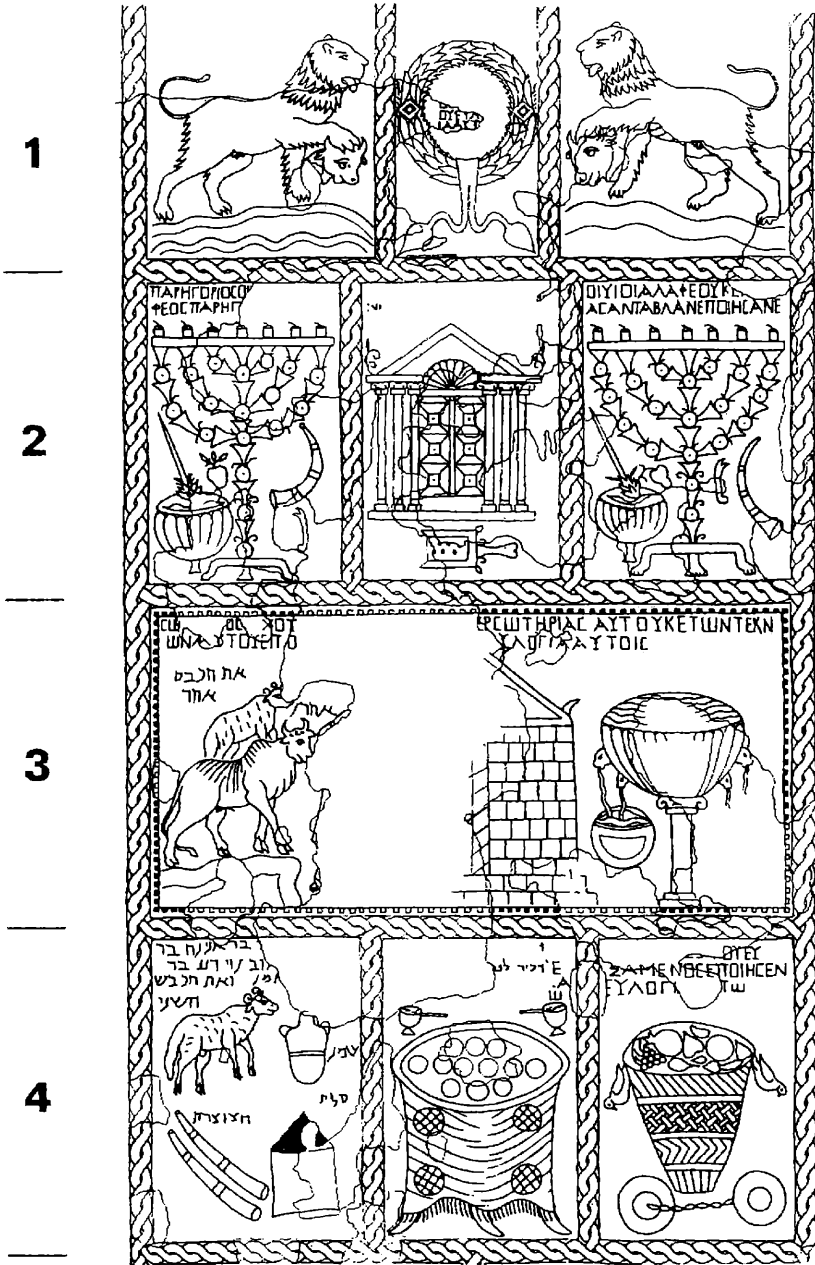


Fig. 2: Synagogue mosaic, Zippori (after Weiss and Netzer).

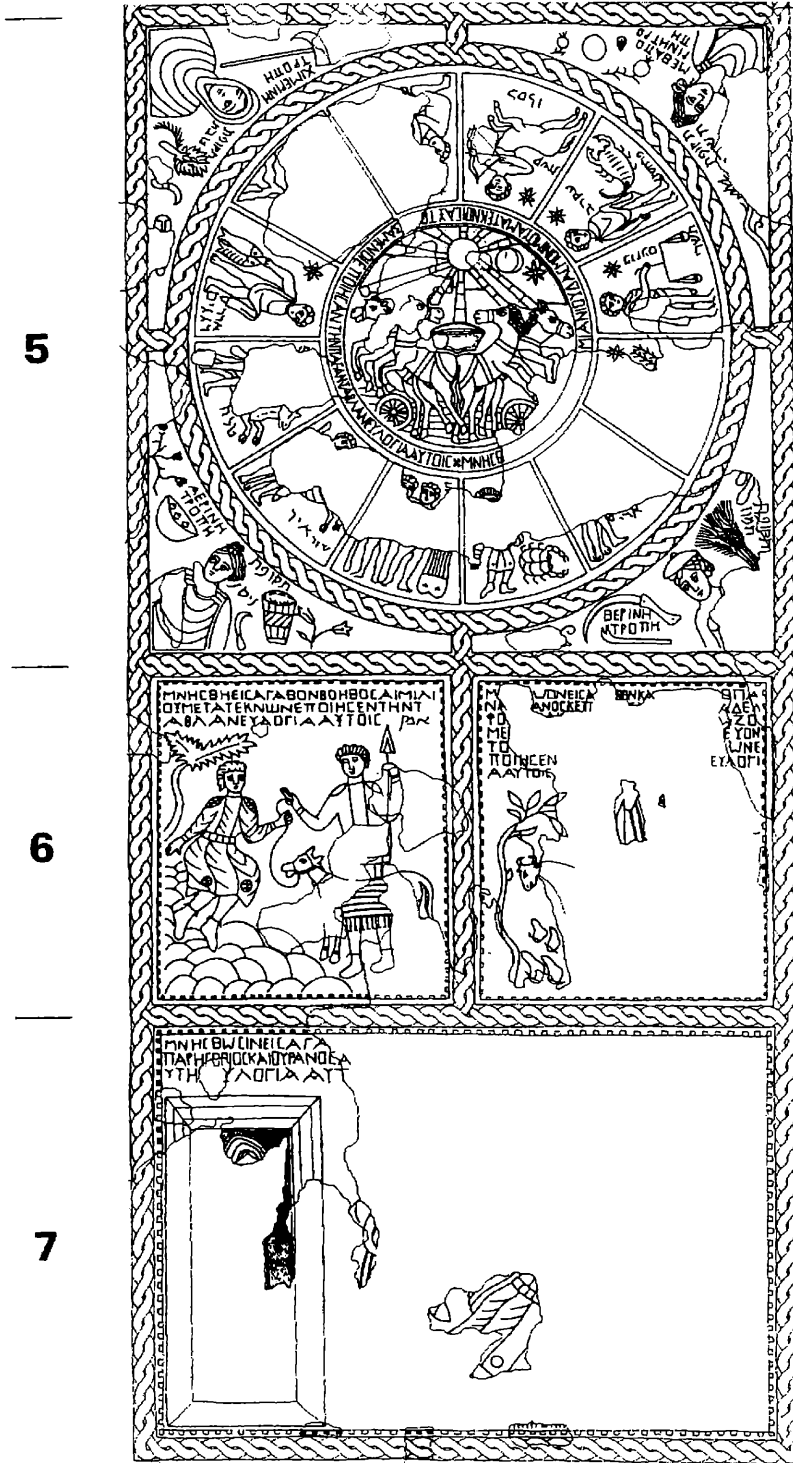


Fig. 2: continued



Fig. 3: Ark before Temple of Dagon, synagogue, Dura Europos (courtesy of Carl H. Kraeling).

rejections of the particular forms favored by the other and the borrowing of motifs."⁴⁵

That, surely, is the case of the central feature of Sepphoris, the great zodiac at the center of the synagogue mosaic. As Seth Schwartz and Weiss have documented, the motif was inspired by Roman art, including mosaic pavements, and became a motif in synagogues.⁴⁶ In my opinion, the Sepphoris zodiac did not however simply take over the pagan meaning, as Schwartz would have it, providing a visible "reflection of a heavenly temple;" rather, it engages the transferred motif in a conceptual dialogue. Thus, the face of Helios is replaced by beams of light, in a way that not only symbolize God's power over the universe, as Weiss argues, but also does so in a way that also asserts the Jewish belief that God himself is invisible. Bianca Kuehnel has shown that the mosaicists appropriated a pagan image and then de-paganized it;⁴⁷ and recognizing the process through which the image of the pagan deity is effaced is an aspect of the result. Moreover, a reference may have been intended to Christian art, which, when the Sepphoris mosaic was being laid, was the dominant visual culture. The contemporary mosaic in St. Paul's outside the walls in Rome uses similar pagan materials to make its own claims; *Sol invictus* on the triumphal arch is boldly pictured there as Christ, visible to all and adored by angels, gentiles, and Jews alike.

Significantly, the Temple and Aron HaKodesh were appropriated in Christian works. Its arch supported on two columns and with a shell, the Holy of Holies on the sixth-century Byzantine Basilewsky pyxis in St. Petersburg (Hermitage Museum, Fig. 4),⁴⁸ for example, recalls the specific structure depicted at Capernaum, Pequi'in, Chorazin, Sepphoris, and Susiya, in the latter, flanked by the menoroth and sacrificial animals.⁴⁹ A vessel for Eucharistic bread, the Byzantine pyxis even includes the eternal lamp, table, incense bowl, and shofroth found in

⁴⁵ Elsner, "Archaeologies and Agendas," 126.

⁴⁶ S. Schwartz, "On the Program and Reception of the Synagogue Mosaics," in *From Dura to Sepphoris*, 165–81; Weiss, *Sepphoris Synagogue*, 104–41. See also Fine, *Art & Judaism*, 87–92.

⁴⁷ B. Kuehnel, "The Synagogue Floor Mosaic in Sepphoris: Between Paganism and Christianity," *From Dura to Sepphoris*, 31–43.

⁴⁸ W. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters* (Mainz am Rhein, 1976), 117; A. St. Clair, "The Basilewsky Pyxis: Typology and Topography in the Exodus Tradition," *Cahiers archéologiques* 32 (1984): 15–30.

⁴⁹ See S. Gutman, Z. Yeivin, and E. Netzer, "Excavations in the Synagogue at Horvat Susiya," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed. L. Levine (Detroit, 1982), 123–8.



Fig. 4: Aaron before Tabernacle, Basilewsky pyxis, St. Petersburg, Hermitage (courtesy of Kurt Weitzmann).

the Jewish representations. Moreover, as in the Consecration panel at Dura and the scene of sacrifice at Sepphoris, the altar is attended by the High Priest and the goat of the men bearing animals and grain.

A version of the same form is found before the actual altars in the Chapel of the Priest John at Khirbet al-Mukhayyat (562) and the early seventh-century Chapel of the Theotokos on Mt. Nebo (Fig. 5)⁵⁰ where, as at Susiya, the tabernacle (with the Ark of the Covenant visible inside) is flanked by sacrificial animals. In view of the identical medium and placement within the sanctuary, it is difficult to believe that the Jewish and these Christian depictions are independent of one another, or, in this case, derive independently from a common Late Antique source.⁵¹ Both the Basilevsky pyxis and the mosaics near the actual altars in the Mt. Nebo chapels invoke the blood sacrifices in the Jewish Temple as precedent for Christ's eternal sacrifice commemorated in the Christian Eucharist. In contrast to Jewish depictions of the same theme, at Dura and Sepphoris for example, which establish a direct relationship between the synagogue service and the lost temple cult, the representations of the Holy of Holies in the Christian contexts assert the opposite, namely, that Christianity has superseded Judaism and its liturgy. In the Church, the depiction of the Temple engages the famous typology in Hebrews 9–10:

The First Covenant indeed had its ordinances of divine service and its sanctuary, but a material sanctuary. For a tent was prepared—the first tent—in which was the lamp-stand, and the table with the bread of the Presence; this is called the Holy Place. Beyond the second curtain was the tent called the Most Holy Place. Here was a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant plated all over with gold... But now Christ has come, high priest of good things already in being. The tent of his priesthood is a greater and more perfect one, not made by men's hands... For the law contains but a shadow, and no true image, of the good things which were to come; it provides for the same sacrifices year after year, and with these it can never bring the worshippers to perfection for all time. So now, my friends, the blood of Jesus makes us free

⁵⁰ Cf. S. Saller, *The Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo* (Jerusalem, 1941); A. Grabar, "Recherches sur les sources juives de l'art paléochrétien," *Cahiers archéologiques* 11 (1960): 57–71; *Byzantinische Mosaiken aus Jordanien* (cat. of an exhib.) (Rome, 1986), 80–5.

⁵¹ R. Talgam, "Similarities and Differences Between Synagogue and Church Mosaics in Palestine During the Byzantine and Umayyad Periods," in *From Dura to Sepphoris*, 93–110; O. Irshai, "Confronting a Christian Empire: Jewish Culture in the World of Byzantium," in *Cultures of the Jews*, ed. David Biale (New York, 2002), 181–221.

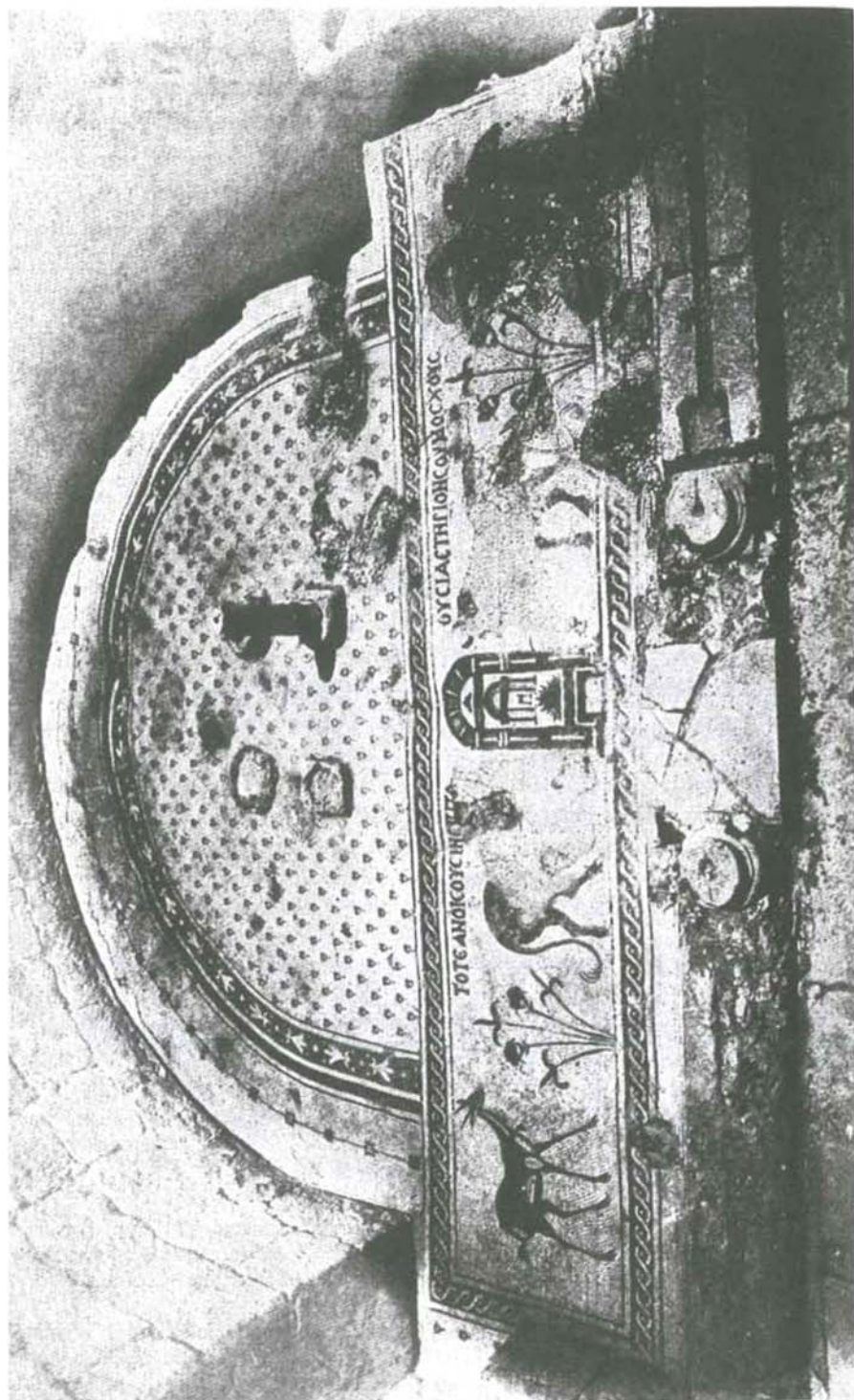


Fig. 5: Tabernacle, Chapel of the Theotokos, Mt. Nebo (after Saller).

to enter boldly into the sanctuary by the new, living way which he has opened for us through the curtain, the way of his flesh (9.1–10.20).

The deployment of the Jewish Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of supersession must have prepared the extensive appropriation of the form in the mid-sixth-century treatise of the *Christian Topography*, formerly attributed to "Cosmas Indicopleustes," but recently assigned to Constantine of Antioch.⁵² Intended from the beginning to be accompanied by illustrations, the treatise has survived in four Middle Byzantine manuscripts that preserve many of the essential characteristics of the original pictorial system.⁵³ The earliest of them, the ninth-century luxury codex in the Vatican (Bib. Apost., Cod. gr. 699), includes a miniature of the Jewish high priests flanking an Ark of the Covenant that closely resembles the two-part structure found at Dura and other Late Antique works (fol. 48r; Fig. 6); the trapezoidal base closed with two paneled doors is capped by a half circle, here painted gold to suggest its sanctity. Constantine's cosmology is based on the claim that the tabernacle was given the shape of the Ark of the Covenant within and, though fashioned by human craftsmen, was patterned after the universe itself, the outer courtyard and Sancta Sanctorum reflecting the relationship of earth to heaven. Thus, in the depiction of the cosmos (cf. fol. 43r; Fig. 7), the terrestrial realm is pictured as a trapezoid, separated by a curtain of the firmament from the upper part symbolizing heaven, where Christ has entered. The later version of the treatise, kept in the Evangelical School in Smyrna before it was destroyed in 1923, included a variant on the typology that pictured Η ΣΚΗΝΗ as a two-part tabernacle comprising a simple columned inner space within the characteristic conch/temple structure, here occupied by the Virgin

⁵² Cf. W. Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustes, Topographie chrétienne* (Paris, 1968–73) and "La 'Topographie Chrétienne' de Cosmas Indicopleustes: Hypothèses sur quelques thèmes de son illustration," *Revue des études Byzantines* 48 (1990): 155–91; E. Revel-Neher, "On the Hypothetical Models of the Byzantine Iconography of the Ark of the Covenant," in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann* (Princeton, 1995), 405–14.

⁵³ Vatican, Bib. Apos., Cod. gr. 699; C. Stornajolo, *Le miniature della Topografia cristiana di Cosma Indicopleuste: codice Vaticano greco 699* (Milan, 1908); Sinai, St. Catherine's Monastery, Cod. gr. 1186; K. Weitzmann and G. Galavaris, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Illuminated Greek Manuscripts*, Vol. 1 (Princeton, 1990); Florence, Bib. Laurenziana, MS. Plut.IX.28; Smyrna (Izmir), Evangelical School, B.8 (destroyed); J. Strzygowksi, *Der Bilderkreis des griechischen Physiologus. Das Kosmas Indikopleustes und Oktateuch nach Handschriften der Bibliothek zu Smyrna* (Stuttgart, 1899); M. Bernabò, *Il fisiologo di Smirne. Le miniature del perduto codice B.8 della Biblioteca della Scuola Evangelica di Smirna* (Florence, 1998).



Fig. 6: High Priests flanking Tabernacle, Vatican, BAV, cod. gr. 699, fol. 48r.

holding her Child and inscribed with the words of Exodus 25:40: "See that you work to the design which you were shown on the mountain" (p. 162; Fig. 8). How the similarity with the dual structure in the Theotokos Chapel mosaic is to be explained is unclear, but surely any account must consider the fact that the Jewish representation of the Ark/temple had long since been incorporated into Christian art, indeed in a Marian context. Directly or indirectly, the Jewish rendering of the tabernacle provided an authenticity for Constantine's arguments which were, after all, directed against pagan claims about the nature of the universe.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Strzygowski, *Bilderkreis*, 56–7; Bernabò, *Fisiologo di Smirne*, 61.



Fig. 8: Virgin and Child, Izmir, Evangelical School (formerly), MS B 8, p. 162 (photo: Paris, Centre Gabrielle Millet).

The quite different depiction of the temple in the ninth-century Pantocrator Psalter on Mt. Athos (Ms. 61, fol. 165r; Fig. 9) presents an analogous instance. The colonnaded outer courtyard, fronted by a curtain and containing the menorah and other *vasa sacra* recalls the representation on the Vatican gold glass and so may derive from a Christian rather than Jewish representation.⁵⁵ But the reference in the post-Iconoclastic manuscript is clearly to the Jewish sanctuary. As Suzy Dufrenne showed, the tabernacle glosses the accompanying words of Psalm 113.12–15:

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the workmanship of men's hands. They have a mouth but they cannot speak; they have eyes but they cannot see; they have ears but they cannot hear; they have noses but they cannot smell; they have hands but they cannot handle; they have feet but they cannot walk; they cannot speak through their throat. Let those that make them become like to them, and all who trust in them.⁵⁶

The miniature portrays David responding to John the Grammarian, a leading iconoclast, who points toward a statue atop a column; the author of the Psalm gestures instead toward Beseleel, who had fashioned the tabernacle and its divinely ordained utensils, including the cherubim. Dufrenne and Kathleen Corrigan have shown that the miniature picks up on a thread of iconodulic polemic which cited the divinely ordained Jewish objects as a partial justification of venerating images.⁵⁷ Hypatius of Ephesus made the connection already during the early sixth century;⁵⁸ and John of Damascus repeatedly cited the tabernacle and its implements, at the end of the second book of *On the Divine Images*, writing: "The tent, the veil, the ark, the altar, and everything within the tent were images and types, the works of men's hands, and they were venerated by all Israel."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ A. St. Clair, "The House of Peace in Paradise: Images of the Feast of Tabernacles on a Jewish Gold Glass," *The Journal of Jewish Art* 12 (1985): 6–15. Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil;" Elsner, "Archaeologies and Agendas."

⁵⁶ "Une illustration 'historique,' inconnue, du psautier du Mont-Athos, Pantocrator N° 61," *Cahiers archéologiques* 15 (1965): 83–95. See also A. Kazhdan and H. Maguire, "Byzantine Hagiographical Texts as Sources on Art," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991): 1–22.

⁵⁷ K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992), 33–5 et passim.

⁵⁸ Cf. F. Diekamp, *Analecta Patristica* (Rome, 1938), 127–9; trans. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 116–7.

⁵⁹ PG 94, col. 1308f.; trans. D. Anderson, *On the Divine Images* (Crestwood, 1980), 66. See Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil."

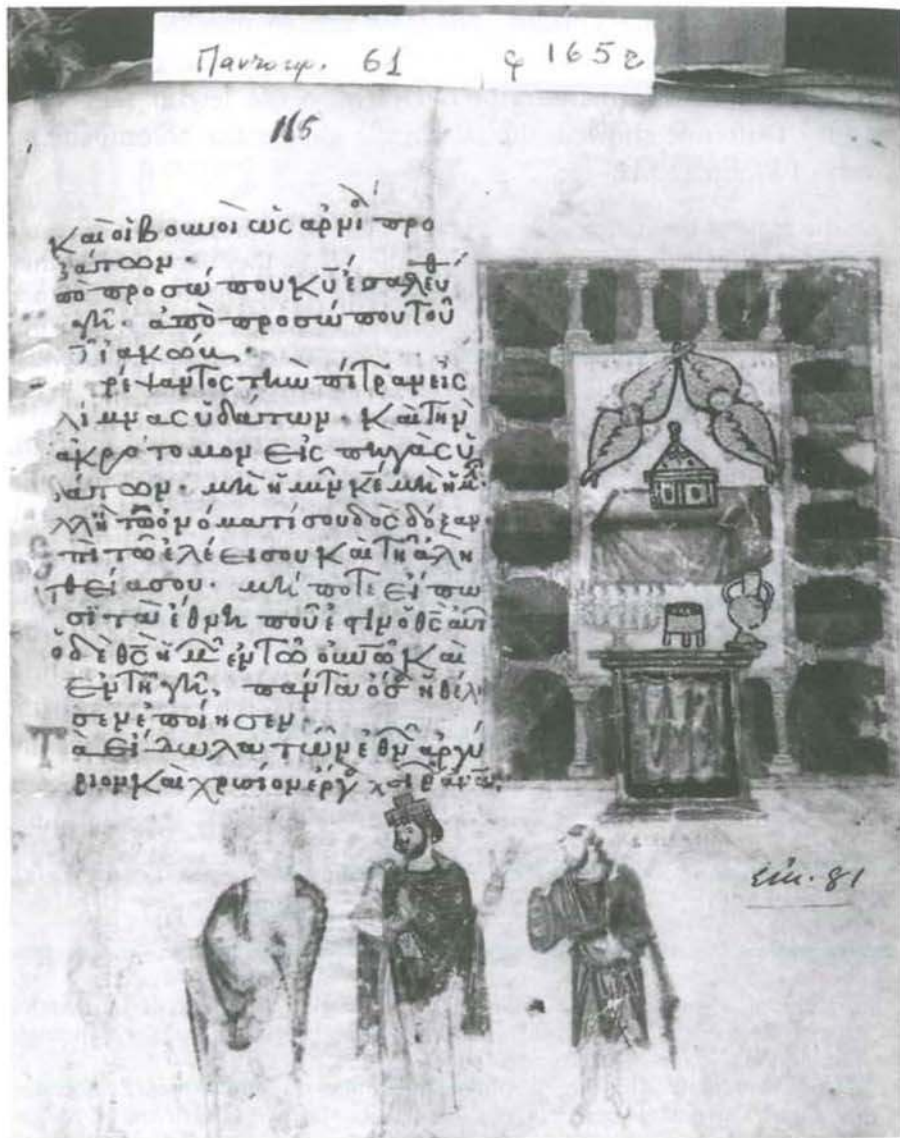


Fig. 9: Psalm 113. Mt. Athos, Pantocrator Monastery, Ms. 61, fol. 165r
 (photo courtesy of Kurt Weitzmann).

As in the Smyrna *Christian Topography*, to serve effectively as a precedent for Christian practice, the representation of the tabernacle had to be identifiably Jewish.⁶⁰ To a certain extent, this remains true also in the Middle Byzantine Octateuch manuscripts where, in certain episodes, the tabernacle retains the distinct form even when the plan-like shape interrupts the narrative. Thus, the sacredness and hence power of the structure is figured in the depiction of God's retribution against the rebellious Israelites, reported in Numbers 16.42–49 (cf. Vat. Cod. gr. 746, fol. 341v; Fig. 10).⁶¹

These depictions reflect the status of the Jewish *vasa sacra* and their special history in Christian theology. What of more ordinary subjects? If the Dura synagogue paintings are excluded, as they must be largely because of the minimum overlap with Christian material, then the surviving Jewish repertory is remarkably small. Undoubtedly this is, at least in part, because it is restricted to floor pavements and minor arts. Unhappily, Abraham's Hospitality is so badly preserved in the Sepphoris synagogue that it can only be identified through reference to Christian works, which renders any consideration of it in this argument tautological.⁶² The *akeda*, however, occurs in several Jewish mosaics, as well as in Christian art; and so its history offers a unique opportunity for comparison.⁶³

First, it must be conceded that, like the Tabernacle, the *akeda* was an exceptional subject. For Jews, it represented God's promise to the People of Israel; for Christians it stood for Christ's willingness to be sacrificed for the people's sin. It was therefore frequently depicted in the art of both groups. As Weiss has shown, the fragmentary remains of the scene in Sepphoris conform to the well-preserved depiction in Beth Alpha (Fig. 11). This, in itself, suggests that—as in the depiction of the Tabernacle—there was an established Jewish iconography, not just ad hoc inventions, notwithstanding the fact that Dura departs from these. Moreover, as Weiss and others have meticulously documented, both Sepphoris and Beth Alpha incorporate significant extra-biblical motifs that can be traced to rabbinical sources, the lamb tied to the tree by a crimson rope, for instance, and Isaac kneeling beside

⁶⁰ The Pantocrator Psalter includes a round showbread table, as in Jewish mosaics; cf. Weiss, *Sepphoris Synagogue*, 98–9.

⁶¹ Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Byzantine Octateuchs*, 200–1.

⁶² See Weiss, *Sepphoris Synagogue*.

⁶³ See Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 194–5 et passim.



Fig. 10: Retribution against Rebellious Israelites, Vatican, BAV, cod. gr. 746, fol. 341v.

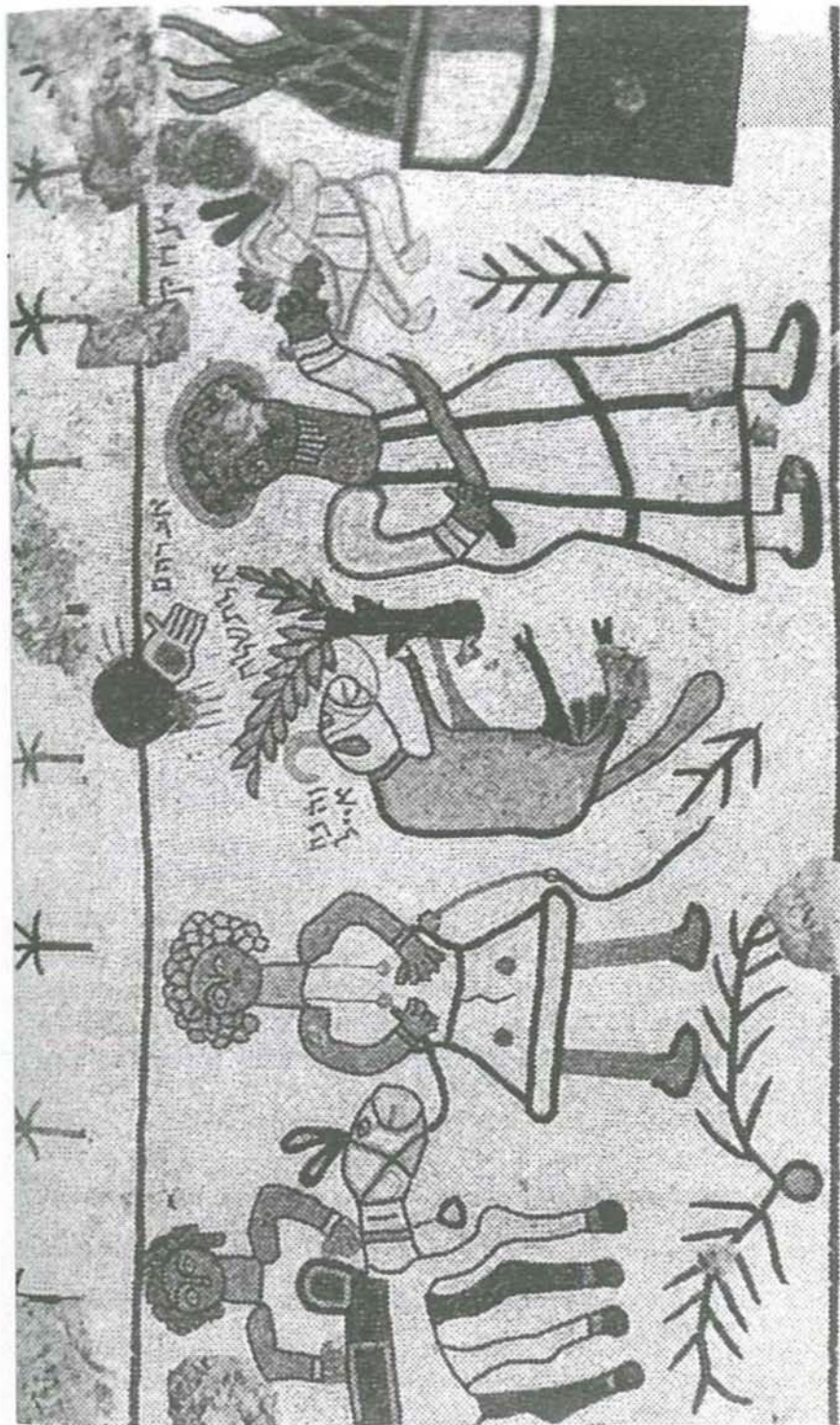


Fig. 11: Sacrifice of Isaac, synagogue, Beth Alpha (after Avi-Yonah).

the altar.⁶⁴ The essential features, including the “Jewish” elements, recur in the manuscripts of the *Christian Topography* (e.g. Vatican 699, fol. 59r; Fig. 12); in this case, as in the use of the Jewish form of the tabernacle, Constantine of Antioch may have intentionally incorporated a Jewish composition. If so, then it may again have been to anchor the typological aspect, as in the text, which emphasizes that the *akedah* is a “type of the mystery of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ” and took place “on the very mountain where also the Lord Christ was offered up as a sacrifice for the whole world and where he endured the saving cross.”⁶⁵ The point is made pictorially by the repetition of the figure of Isaac directly above the ram caught by the horns, here carrying the wood of sacrifice as Christ would carry the cross on his shoulders. If the Byzantine manuscript does derive ultimately from a Jewish source, its derivation—if recognized—could only have served to assure that the viewers would perceive that source through the lens of Christian typology. As in the well-known Roman custom of *damnatio memoriae*, in which the portraits of disgraced emperors (and others) were obliterated but not completely destroyed,⁶⁶ the Jewish “original” had to be partly preserved so that the process of interpretation remained evident. Thus, even if certain Byzantine representations of events reported in Hebrew Scripture, like the *akeda* in the *Christian Topography*, were based on Jewish illustrations, they were not mindless replicas; and any attempt to read the “hypothetical lost Jewish” model through them is destined, therefore, to be fraught with serious problems of interpretation. This is certainly true of the eleventh-century Book of Kings (Vat. gr. 333) that played such an important role in Weitzmann’s theory of the relationship of the Dura synagogue paintings and Christian art. As Mati Meyer has demonstrated, identifying the textual and pictorial sources underlying the scene of the Exaltation of David is at least (fol. 24r) problematic and actually appears to be a clever eleventh-century confection.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Weiss, *Sepphoris Synagogue*, 141–53; I am not certain, as Weiss suggests, that the lamb in Beth Alpha was meant to be shown as hanging.

⁶⁵ Trans. J. W. McCrindle, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk* (London 1897), 177–8.

⁶⁶ See C. Hendrick, *History and Silence: Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity* (Austin, 2000).

⁶⁷ M. Meyer, “Did the Daughters of Israel Come out Dancing and Singing to Meet David? A Biblical Image in Christian-Macedonian Imperial Attire,” *Byzantion* 73 (2003): 467–87.

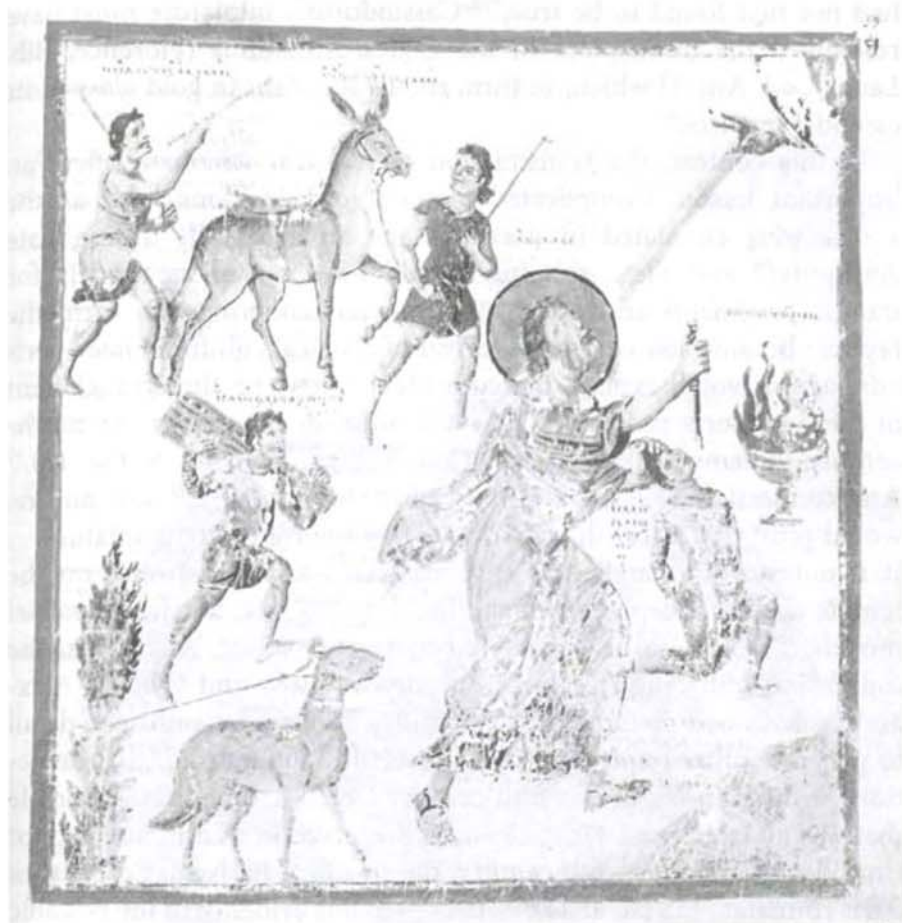


Fig. 12: Sacrifice of Isaac, Vatican, BAV, cod. gr. 699, fol. 59r.

The issue is complicated further by processes of pictorial transmission that, so far, have been given insufficient attention in the discussions of Jewish art. Renderings of the Ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle/temple circulated on coins, gold glasses, and other portable objects; the continuity in depictions of these sacred structures is therefore no surprise. An eighth-century Latin source, moreover, suggests that such Jewish depictions were considered authoritative. Commenting on a depiction of the tabernacle in Cassiodorus's *Codex Grandior*, Bede noted that: "These distinctions which we have found in Cassiodorus's picture we have taken care to note here briefly, reckoning that he learnt them from the Jews of old and that such a learned man had no intention of proposing as a model for our reading what he himself

had not first found to be true."⁶⁸ Cassiodorus's miniature must have resembled the frontispiece in the Codex Amiatinus (Florence, Bib. Laur., Cod. Am. 1) which, in turn, recalls the Vatican gold glass in its essential features.⁶⁹

In this context, the transmission of classical schemata offers an important lesson. Complicated pictorial compositions such as the zodiac were circulated in drawings and small objects during Late Antiquity,⁷⁰ and these certainly would have served as models for mosaic pavements and other monumental renderings. In turn, the replicas became sources in the revival of classical culture in later periods, which would explain the coincidence between the arrangement of the Sepphoris zodiac and the miniature in the eighth- or ninth-century Ptolemy in the Vatican (Cod. Vat. gr. 1291, fol. 9; Fig. 13).⁷¹ Any connection with Sepphoris is, obviously, indirect,⁷² and no one would posit that a Jewish source underlay the Byzantine miniature. It is noteworthy that Bede tested his own learned discourse on the temple against a depiction of the building.⁷³ Texts, not just pictorial models, should also be considered as vectors of art. Already in the fourth and fifth centuries, both Gregory of Nyssa and Cyril of Alexandria described pictures of the Sacrifice of Isaac in sufficient detail to generate other renderings, their texts also authorizing such depictions.⁷⁴ The translation of a fifth-century Greek Alexandrian chronicle that was updated from 476–518 and is preserved in a Latin manuscript from the seventh or eighth century, the so-called Barbarus Scaligeri in Paris (Bib. nat., MS lat. 4884),⁷⁵ offers precious evidence of the possible

⁶⁸ Haec ut in pictura Cassiodori distincta repperimus breviter adnotare curavimus rati eum ab antiquis haec Iudaeis didicisse neque virum tam erudtium voluisse in exemplum legendi proponere quae non ipse prius verus esse cognovisset; *De templo*, II, 28; CCSL 119A, p. 193; trans. S. Connolly (Liverpool, 1995), 67. See Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil."

⁶⁹ Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil."

⁷⁰ K. Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* (Cambridge, 1959); A. Stückelberger, *Bild und Wort. Das illustrierte Fachbuch in der antiken Naturwissenschaft, Medizin und Technik* (Mainz am Rhein, 1994).

⁷¹ See *Vedere i classici* (cat. of an exhib.) (Vatican, 1996), 161–4.

⁷² Weiss, *Sepphoris Synagogue*, 121 and 141.

⁷³ E. Revel-Neher, "La double page du Codex Amiatinus et ses rapports avec les plans du tabernacle dans l'art juif et dans l'art byzantin," *Journal of Jewish Art* 9 (1982): 6–17.

⁷⁴ Cf. Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 34.

⁷⁵ Eusebius, *Chronicorum liber prior*, ed. A. Schoene (Berlin, 1875), append. VI, pp. 177–239; Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustès*, Vol. 1, 146–8; É. de Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques* (Brussels, 1961), 39–40.

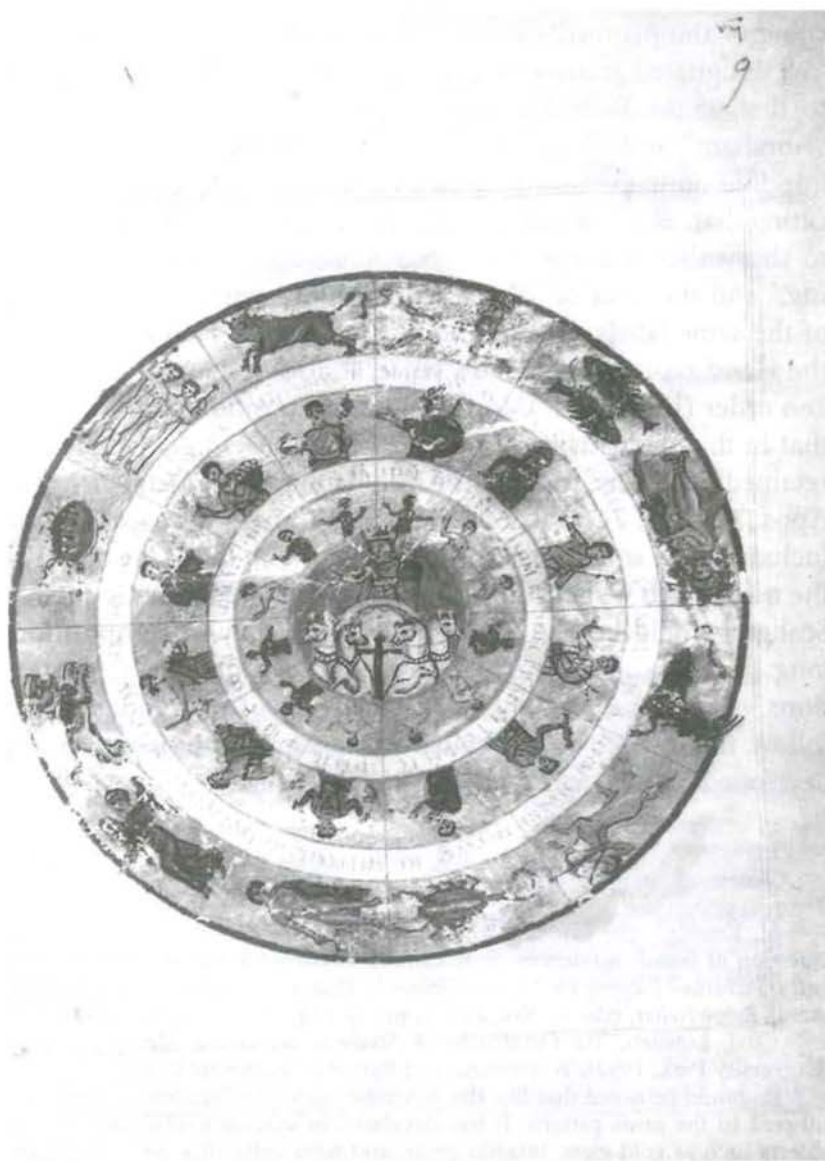


Fig. 13: Zodiac, Vatican, BAV, cod. gr. 1291, fol. 9r.

role verbal “depictions” may have played.⁷⁶ Blank spaces are left for pictures throughout the schematic account of biblical history, and in three of these, labels indicate the actual placement of figures and settings. The first one (fol. 15v; Fig. 14) leaves little doubt that at least some of the planned pictures were based on pre-existing depictions. The designated arrangement of the Sacrifice of Isaac conforms closely to that of the Beth Alpha mosaic, with the “altarium” at the right, “Abraham” and “Isaac” at the center (the boy clearly envisioned as kneeling on the ground), “God’s voice” at the top (its placement indicating that, as in the mosaic, Abraham was turning around in response to the words “Do not raise your hand against the boy”, the “offering,” and the “tree of Sabec.” Indeed, the Jewish mosaic includes two of the same labels, “Isaac” and “Abraham” (in Hebrew), and beneath the Hand representing God’s voice, it also designates the Lord’s spoken order (in Aramaic). In turn, the composition conforms closely to that in the manuscripts of the *Christian Topography* (where labels are retained), and even more in the Middle Byzantine Octateuchs (e.g. Bib. Apos., Cod. gr. 747, fol. 43v; Fig. 15).⁷⁷ Though they seem not to have included such small details as the red tether in the scene of the *akedah*, the use of such verbal guides as those preserved in the Codex Barbarus Scaligeri would help to explain the consistency of compositions over long distances and across cultures and also the characteristic variations.⁷⁸ Painters with only basic knowledge of written language could follow them, even while constructing depictions from conventions developed within their own artistic traditions.

⁷⁶ H. Kessler, “The Codex Barbarus Scaligeri, the *Christian Topography*, and the Question of Jewish Models of Early Christian Art,” in *Between Judaism and Christianity. Pictorials Playing on Mutual Grounds: Essays in Honour of Prof. Elisabeth (Elisheva) Revel-Neher*, eds., K. Kogman-Appel and M. Meyer (Leiden, 2008), 139–54.

⁷⁷ Cf. J. Lowden, *The Octateuchs: A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illustration* (University Park, 1992); Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Byzantine Octateuchs*.

⁷⁸ It should be noted that like the Ark/tabernacle, the Sacrifice of Isaac could have adhered to the same pattern. It too circulated in various media, including portable objects such as gold glass, intaglio gems, and terra cotta tiles; See J. Gutmann, “The Sacrifice of Isaac: Variations on a Theme in Early Jewish and Christian Art,” in ΘΙΑΣΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΜΟΥΣΩΝ. *Studien zu Antike und Christentum. Festschrift für Josef Fink zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Dieter Ahrens (Cologne, 1984), 115–22. Written rather than pictorial models are attested from an early date as in the famous letter of Paulinus of Nola to Sulpicius Severus describing an apse composition; Paulinus, Epistle 32.17; ed. William Hartel, CSEL 29: 291–2; C. Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art 300–1150* (Englewood Cliffs, 1971), 20–3. See Kessler, “Codex Barbarus Scaligeri.”

By the seventh century, when the Codex Barbarus Scaligeri was made, Judaism was in any case an aniconic, if not iconoclastic, religion.⁷⁹ As Charles Barber has argued, the effacement of the mosaics in the synagogue of Na'aran, especially the obliteration of the Helios head and other figural elements, is to be understood not only in negative terms but also as a reassertion of Jewish faith in the written revelation.⁸⁰ It is, in this sense, like Roman statues in which a new emperor had his face carved onto that of a deposed predecessor; it is literally double-faced. This is not to say that Jews abandoned all representation; quite the contrary, as Barber points out and Narkiss's work on the St. Petersburg golden Bible confirms.⁸¹ The assimilative culture that produced the Dura synagogue and Sepphoris mosaic among other great monuments entered a period of hibernation and metamorphosis. When, in turn, the Karaites introduced the Temple into their illuminated manuscripts, they maintained the basic structure but now rendered it in contemporary language. In the First St. Petersburg Pentateuch (Public Lib. Firk. Hebr. II B 17 fol., 5r; Fig. 16) illuminated in Palestine or Egypt in 929, the gate into the outer court is a horseshoe arch, the *vasa sacra* recall Abbasid metalwork, and the Holy of Holies is reduced to pure ornament, even the cherubim. Whether the ultimate model was a Late Antique depiction like that of the Vatican gold glass is uncertain;⁸² the placement of the gate, menorah, and inner sanctum does suggest a relationship. What is clear is that the emphasis on the temple in these books engages Karaite fundamentalism, which led ultimately to even greater abstraction and the emergence of the characteristic medieval Jewish art form of micrography.⁸³

No evidence survives to support the notion that Jews in Byzantium continued to produce figural art during the Persian invasion of Palestine in 614 and the radical shifts in Jewish-Christian relations that followed. The seventh-century debates that ensued often engaged the question of images, Leontius of Neapolis's *Apology against the Jews*, for instance; and these leave no doubt that Christians regarded Juda-

⁷⁹ See R. Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study* (Princeton, 1995), 180–219.

⁸⁰ C. Barber, "The Truth in Painting: Iconoclasm and Identity in Early-Medieval Art," *Speculum* 72 (1997): 1019–36. On Na'aran, see Fine, *Art & Judaism*, 82–7.

⁸¹ B. Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts* (Jerusalem, 1969), 42–3; Y. Levy, "Ezekiel's Plan in an Early Karaite Bible," *Jewish Art* 19–20 (1993/94): 68–85.

⁸² Revel-Neher, *Signe de la rencontre*, 133–8; Levy, "Ezekiel's Plan."

⁸³ Levy, "Ezekiel's Plan."



Fig. 16: Tabernacle, St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Firkovitch Hebrew ms. II B 17 fol. 5r.

ism as an aniconic faith.⁸⁴ In the debate over images known as the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo*, for instance, the author proves Jewish defeat by asking rhetorically: “Where are the tablets, the ark of the covenant, the tabernacle, the rod of Aaron, the burning bush, manna, the pillar of fire?”⁸⁵ Indeed, the belief that Jews had no figural art was

⁸⁴ V. Déroche, “L’authenticité de l’ “Apologie contre Juifs” de Léontios de Néapolis,” *BCH* 110 (1986): 655–69; A. Cameron, “Byzantine and Jews: Some Recent Work on Early Byzantium,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 249–74; L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclastic Era (ca 680–850): The Sources. An Annotated Survey* (Aldershot, 2001), 252.

⁸⁵ *Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew*, ed. A. McGiffert (Marbourg, 1889), 59–60; D. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia, 1994); Cameron, “Byzantine and Jews,” 268.

central in the defenses of images in Greek image theory from that time on and would have been difficult to maintain had a rich tradition of identifiably Jewish imagery been available in Byzantium. According to the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787), a Jew named Tes-saraontapêchys had advised the Caliph Yazid in 721:

Give an order without delay or postponement that an encyclical letter be issued throughout your dominions to the effect that every kind of pictorial representation, be it on boards or in wall-mosaic or on holy vessels or altar-cloths, or anything else of the sort that is found in all Christian churches should be obliterated and entirely destroyed; not only these, but also all the effigies that are set up as decoration in the marketplaces.⁸⁶

The belief was inextricably tied to Christology and hence to the notion of supersession. Christians maintained that whereas God had revealed himself to the Jews through Scripture, he had appeared to Christians in the flesh; as John proclaims: "For while the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; but God's only Son, he who is nearest to the Father's heart, he has made him known." (Jn. 1.16-18)

Indeed, because of this, iconoclasts were themselves condemned as "Judaizers," not only in Constantinople, but also in Palestine. Thus, writing in Jerusalem at the beginning of the ninth century, the Christian defender of images, Abu Qurrah, addressed his *A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons* to Jews as well as Muslims;⁸⁷ and, as Corrigan has shown, the arguments underlying the incorporation of the Tabernacle in the Pantocrator Psalter were directed to aniconic Jews.⁸⁸ Under the assault of "Judaizing" iconoclasts, art became a sign of Christian orthodoxy identifiable with Christ himself.

Thus, it is conceivable that the depiction of Abraham's Hospitality in the Middle Byzantine Octateuchs shares a lineage with the depiction of the same subject at Sepphoris (cf. Vatican, Cod. Vat. gr. 746, fol. 72v; Fig. 17);⁸⁹ it, too, pictures Sarah looking on from her house and Abraham approaching the three men, one of whom leans toward him. Moreover, as Rainer Stichel has noted,⁹⁰ the inclusion of the calf in the

⁸⁶ Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 151; Schick, *Christian Communities*, 215-6.

⁸⁷ S. Griffith, *Theodore Abū Qurrah: A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons* (Louvain, 1997).

⁸⁸ Corrigan, *Visual Polemics*, 34.

⁸⁹ Cf. Weiss, *Sepphoris Synagogue*, 141-53.

⁹⁰ Stichel, "Ausserkononische Elemente," 166-8.



Fig. 17: Abraham's Hospitality, Vatican, BAV, cod. gr. 746, fol. 72v.

foreground derives from the *Testament of Abraham*, an apocryphal text of unquestioned Jewish origin.⁹¹ The longer version of the *Testament* reports that after the three men had consumed the meat that Abraham provided for them, the calf arose and suckled his mother again (6, 5). But these "Jewish" features only highlight the problems scholars face in the study of the Jewish contribution to Byzantine art. The calf, for instance, appears in the Istanbul, Smyrna, and Vatican 746 manuscripts, but not in Vatican 747, the earliest surviving version that students of the Octateuch family concur is closest to the (lost) prototype.⁹² This strongly suggests that the midrashic feature was actually added to the illustration of Genesis 18.8–10 only during the Middle Byzantine period, undoubtedly from a manuscript of the *Testament of Abraham*. Moreover, the history of the apocryphal text is characteristically complicated; even if it derived ultimately from Jewish sources, it was widely circulated in eastern Christian culture from an early date and was even incorporated in the liturgy.⁹³ The resurrected calf in the Octateuch manuscripts would have underscored the Christological and Eucharistic significance long read into the meal offered to the three men and evident in the very composition, which features an angel at the center blessing the food.⁹⁴ The Christological typology is implied by the central figure's frontality and blessing gesture; as in the Smyrna manuscript and over-painted Vatican 747 miniature, it probably originally also bore a cross-nimbus. Thus, the miniature incorporates a very old and widely-disseminated tradition of seeing the Trinity in the "Philoxenie;"⁹⁵ in the depiction of Abraham's meeting, the picture thus reveals the true meaning of the "Old Testament" event. In the same way, the Ark of the Covenant in the other Vatican Octateuch (Cod. Vat. gr. 746, fol. 443r) is adorned with a Deesis to make the point that Christ had now replaced the temple

⁹¹ K. Kohler, "The Pre-Talmudic Haggadah," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 7 (1895), 581–606; F. Schmidt, *Le Testament grec d'Abraham* (Tübingen, 1986), 113.

⁹² Lowden, *Octateuchs*, 121–2 et passim; Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 322–3 et passim.

⁹³ Cf. H. M. von Erffa, *Ikonomie der Genesis* Vol. II (Munich, 1995), 217–9. Although most of the surviving manuscripts of the "long recension" in which the feature is mentioned date only from the fourteenth-century and later, at least one eleventh-century transcription of it in Vienna has come down (Nationalbibliothek, Cod. gr. 333); cf. Schmidt, *Testament*, 18–9.

⁹⁴ E.g. Ambrose, *De Abraham*, 1, 5; PL 14, col. 437.

⁹⁵ See for example, Eusebius, *Εὐαγγελικῆς ἀποδείξεως*, Bk. 5, chap. 9; PG, 22, cols. 381–4.

instruments as the source of expiation with an iconography that developed only after the Iconoclastic period and to make a point underscored in the iconoclastic debates.⁹⁶

The most important of the arguments about Judaism set forth during Iconoclasm concerned not simply iconography or even the supersession of instruments of worship, however; rather, they constituted the very essence of divine revelation. For the defenders of images, the iconoclasts were Judaizers not only because they evoked the Second Commandment literally but also because, in so doing, they were allegedly denying the reality of Christ's incarnation. To reject material images, the iconoclasts argued, was tantamount to rejecting Christianity's central tenet, namely that God had assumed human form and had replaced the law with his very person. Even after Iconoclasm, art continued to play the role Elsner found in it earlier, of "a complex mixture of structural rejections of the particular forms [by one cult] favoured by the other and the borrowing of motifs." Thus the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy* promulgated immediately after the end of iconoclasm begins:

Those who penetrate the words of Moses, "Watch yourselves, because the day the Lord appeared to you on the mountain of Horeb, you heard the sound of the words but you did not see his form;" they know how to respond: If we have seen something, we have really seen it, as the son of thunder has taught: "It was there from the beginning; we have heard it; we have seen it with our own eyes; we looked upon it, and felt with our own hands; and it is of this we tell. Our theme is the word of life. This life was made visible; we have seen it and bear our testimony." Thus, those who have received from God the power to distinguish the prohibition contained in the law and the instruction borne by Grace, the one which in the law is invisible, the other which, in Grace, is visible and palpable and, for this reason, they represent in images the realities seen and touched and venerated.

The illustrations of Deuteronomy 18.15 in the Byzantine Octateuchs illustrate this literally: "The Lord your God will raise up a prophet from among you like myself, and you shall listen to him." In Vatican Cod. Vat. gr. 747 (fol. 198v; Fig. 18), as in the others, Moses is pictured holding a scroll inscribed with prophetic words, pointing out a bust of Christ in heaven to Jews wearing *tallesim*, who cower before

⁹⁶ Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*, 12-3.

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 χεῖρα ἀντιχέρου· πόδα ἀντιπόδου·
 οἰωνοῖσιν· οὕτω σδωσθήσεται·

ἡμεῖς
 δὲ

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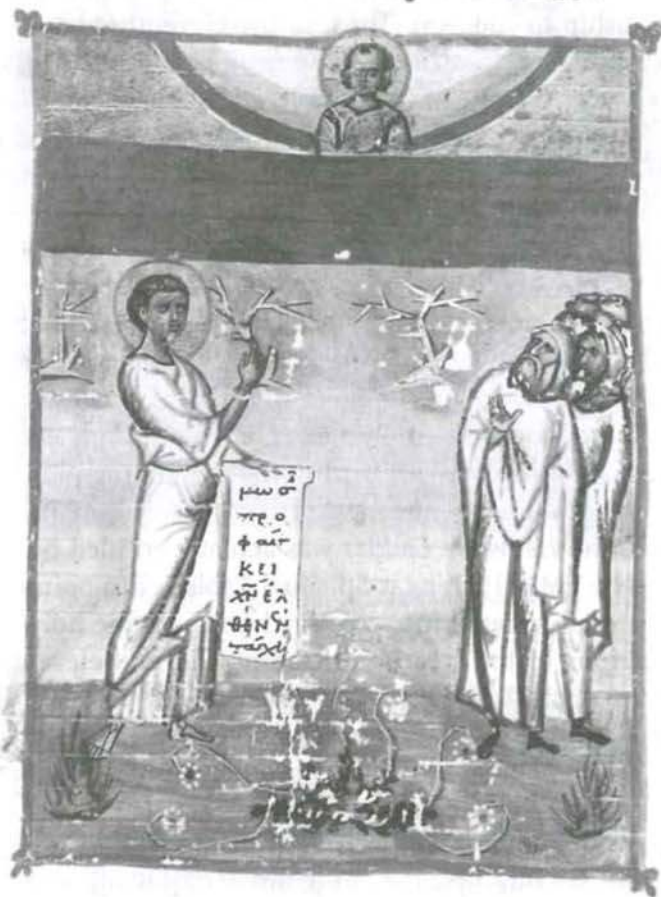
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Fig. 18: Prophecy of Moses, Vatican, BAV, cod. gr. 747, fol. 198v.

the vision.⁹⁷ It is as much an illustration of Acts 3.22, where Peter quotes the passage as evidence of the new dispensation. Distinguishing Christians from Jews, God's incarnation replaced the law and made art essential.

Byzantine Christians occasionally allied themselves with Jews in opposition to Muslims. The growth of the importance of icons after the end of Iconoclasm inevitably came to comprehend Christianity's very relationship to Judaism. Thus, in the eleventh-century paintings of the Saklı Kilisse in Cappadocia, the Annunciation to the Virgin not only takes place in front of the temple and includes an image of the Incarnate Word, but it also figures the Incarnation with an icon.⁹⁸ At work here is a play on words. The icon interpolated in the scene is the Mandylion, the image-not-made-by-human-hands or *αχειροποίητον*, a reference to Christ's body which is called "acheiropoieton" in 2 Corinthians 5.1. This very icon, the Ur-icon of Byzantine Christianity had, in fact, long since come to embody the very process of the putative Christian supersession of Judaism, a process brilliantly figured in a late-eleventh-century manuscript of John of Climacus's *Heavenly Ladder* preserved today in the Vatican (Bib. Vat., Cod. Ross. 251, fol. 12v; Fig. 19). In a text written during the key moment at the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh century and at the very foot of Mt. Sinai, the *Heavenly Ladder* was actually entitled by its author, ΠΛΑΚΕΚ ΠΙΝ[ΕΥΜΑΤΙ]ΚΑΪ, i.e. Spiritual Tablets, in a pointed contrast with the material tablets Moses received on the same holy mountain. In most editions of the treatise, including the mid-eleventh-century manuscript in Paris (Bib. nat., MS Coislin 263, fol. 7r; Fig. 20) the idea is visualized simply with diagrams of two inscribed rectangular slabs;⁹⁹ but in the Vatican codex, which was produced precisely at a moment of renewed concern about images, the spiritual tablets are presented in the guise of the Holy Mandylion and its miraculously-made offset, the Keramion. Set side-by-side and painted atop blank rectangles that

⁹⁷ Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Byzantine Octateuchs*, 217–8; Revel-Neher, *Image of the Jew*, 74.

⁹⁸ H. Kessler, "Medieval Art as Argument," in *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed., B. Cassidy (Princeton, 1993), 59–70 (reprinted in *Spiritual Seeing*, 53–63); A. Carr, "Leo of Chalcedon and the Icons," in *Byzantine East, Latin West*, 579–84; see the brilliant analysis by A. Lidov, "Holy Face, Holy Script, Holy Gate: Revealing the Edessa Paradigm in Christian Imagery," in *Mandilion. Intorno al Sacra Volto, da Bisanzio a Genova*, eds., G. Wolf, C. Bozzo, A. Masetti (cat. of an exhibition, Genoa 2004) (Milan, 2004), 145–62.

⁹⁹ J. Martin, *The Illustration of the Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus* (Princeton, 1954), 172–4.



Fig. 19: "Spiritual Tablets," Vatican, BAV, cod. Ross. 251, fol. 12v.

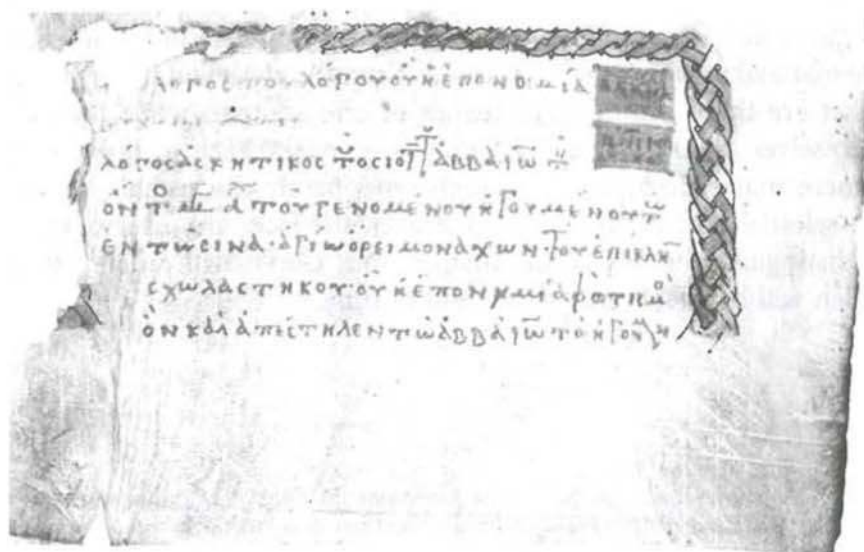


Fig. 20: "Spiritual Tablets," Paris, BnF, MS. Coislin, 263, fol. 7r.

might have received the inscribed faux marbre usually found in this location, they make the point that is at the very core of Byzantine art: In replacing the written covenant with an incarnate God, Christianity abrogated the old laws, and this made images not only possible but also necessary as a means of communication. Abu Qurrah had made just this point three centuries earlier: "Like the words that were inscribed on the two tablets; they are an icon for the incarnation of the eternal Word of God. Is not writing only an icon for audible speech? So, this is an icon for the primordial, talking Word."¹⁰⁰

By the eleventh century, when the Vatican miniature was painted, during a minor episode involving the nature of images, Judaism was understood in Byzantium as a carnal religion locked in materiality and Christianity, by contrast, as a living faith that offered direct communication with the heavenly God. Summing up arguments that were now centuries old, John Italos still contrasted Christian icons to Jewish law and the *vasa sacra* instituted by Moses:

Images are of two kinds: either they are written words, as when God himself engraved the law on tablets of stone, and old holy books he commanded to be written, or they are material contemplations, as when God arranged everything together, the manna jar and rod kept in the ark as a memorial. According to the custom of excellent men, we make and set up holy and venerable icons.¹⁰¹

Not every Byzantine Christian accepted this argument, however. The image, as the depiction of sacred images in the Vatican Climacus shows, had to be constructed to demonstrate that just as Christ himself was in the flesh but not of it, so too pictures of him were independent of the material in which they expressed. Thus, the cloth and its terra cotta offset are there shown as opposites of one another, while the faces themselves are the same, albeit mirror reversals. Each is, in this way, a mere materialization of the archetype, barely discernable beneath the celestial blue background. Moreover, the faces are distinctly dark to distinguish the face in the images from God's own radiant visage which will be visible only at the end of time.

¹⁰⁰ Griffith, *Treatise*, 71.

¹⁰¹ P.-P. Joannou, ed., *Ioannes Italos quaestione quodlibetales* (Studia patristica et byzantina 4) (Ettal, 1956), 151; L. Clucas, *The Trial of John Italos and the Crisis of Intellectual Values in Byzantium in the Eleventh Century* (Munich, 1981), 41-8.

Even this solution, however, did not satisfy everyone. Someone—we do not know when, but there is no reason to believe that it was anyone but a Christian—scratched the faces with a pointed instrument, like the *damnatio memoriae* at Na‘aran, leaving a trace of his displeasure with figures of God. For all the arguments to the contrary, the Mosaic prohibition of images remained a concern as it had centuries before during the Iconoclastic controversy and also during the flair-up at the end of the eleventh century. Resistance to images of God deeply affected, not only theory, but also the very concept of image; and that, more than any hypothetical pictorial legacy, was the true Jewish contribution to the development of Byzantine art.¹⁰²

¹⁰² See now, H. Kessler and D. Nirenberg, eds., *Judaism and Christian Art: Aesthetic Anxieties from Catacombs to Colonialism* (Philadelphia, 2011).

“BY MEANS OF COLORS”: A JUDEO-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE IN BYZANTINE ICONOGRAPHY

Elisheva Revel-Neher

The painter... has spread out the blooms of his art. All of these he wrought *by means of colors* as if it were a book that uttered speech... for painting, even if it is silent, is capable of speaking from the wall and being of the greatest benefit.

Gregory of Nyssa, *Laudatio S. Theodori*, PG 46,737

The eyes encourage deep thoughts, and art is able *by means of colors* to ferry over the prayer of the mind.

Agathias, *Anthologia graeca*, I, 34

In a recent article,¹ Walter Cahn noted: “In the high and later Middle Ages, Jews were singled out pictorially through the ascription to them of distinctive physiognomical traits, elements of dress, or symbolic attributes... Thus whereas Jews in early medieval art are all but invisible, later they are hard to miss and indeed endowed with an extravagant hyper-visibility, as if their Jewishness, for the intended viewer, was all that mattered and everything else flowed from this unfortunate condition.”

The image of Jews in art has only recently found its way into the domains of interest of art historians in general. The “birth” of Jewish art and its acceptance as an academic discipline,² themselves a result of research and discoveries in the last 75 years, may have been the trigger

¹ W. Cahn, “The Expulsion of the Jews as History and Allegory in Painting and Sculpture of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” in *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, eds., M. Signer and J. Van Engen (Notre Dame, 2001), 94–110. Quote from page 95.

² E. Revel-Neher, “With Wisdom and Knowledge of Workmanship: Jewish Art Without a Question Mark,” in *Complex Identities: Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art*, eds. M. Baigell and M. Heyd (New Brunswick, 2001), 12–34. G. Sed-Rajna, *Jewish Art* (New York, 1996). See also the pioneering research and works of the fathers of Jewish art, B. Narkiss, U. and K. Schubert, and J. Gutman. The myth of the refusal of figural art in Judaism was convincingly analyzed by K. Bland, *The Artless Jew: Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denial of the Visual* (Princeton, 2000).

needed. The very fact that Judaism recognized and sometimes even encouraged figurative expression in the service of spiritual tradition, gave to Jewish figurations an unexpected weight. Thus, *Jewish art* may have led to *Jews in art* or, at least, to a better look at what they were and how they appeared.

Bernhard Blumenkrantz's³ pioneering book offered for the first time a broad study of the image of the Jew in medieval art, encompassing Old and New Testament subjects, and covering media as varied as sculpture, miniatures, stained glass windows, ivories, and so on. The medieval encounter with the Jew, which translated into images mainly negative, distortive, and aggressive, sometimes bordering on visual violence, was thoroughly researched and presented on the background of patristic texts and polemics. The Western world was extensively covered, the Byzantine imagery totally ignored.

Further studies followed this path. The focus was on Western art, as well as on the decisions concerning the Jews of Western rulers and theologians. Depictions and texts were paralleled and the result was impressively decisive. The visual image matched "à la perfection" Christian intentions. Heinz Schreckenberg's book⁴ broadened widely the scope of iconography and reiterated the importance of comparing medieval text and image. Recent books⁵ ventured into the "otherness" of the Jews and opened new views towards a history of the theme.⁶

Byzantine art as a fertile field of research on the image of the Jew has still mainly remained unsearched. Eighteen years ago, my book *Image of the Jew in Byzantine Art*⁷ and Kathleen Corrigan's study,⁸ although restricted to ninth-century Byzantine Psalters, confronted two different views of largely ignored material. Our opposing interpretations, if it still remains an open question, had the benefit of presenting a visual world of signs and symbols related to Byzantium. Whether fiercely

³ B. Blumenkrantz, *Le Juif médiéval au miroir de l'art chrétien* (Paris, 1966).

⁴ H. Schreckenberg, *Jews in Christian Art: An Illustrated History* (New York, 1996).

⁵ S. Lipton, *Jews, Demons and Saracens* (Princeton, 2001).

⁶ *The Other as Threat: Demonization and Anti-Semitism*. Papers presented at the International Conference of the Vidal Sassoon Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism at the Hebrew University (Jerusalem 1997).

⁷ E. Revel-Neher, *The Image of the Jew in Byzantine Art*. Studies in Anti-Semitism Series (Oxford, 1992).

⁸ K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992).

polemical or a reflection of *realia*, the image of the Jew is a potent source of information and may function as a visual historical document. The Scholion research group on Christians and Jews in Byzantium has widely opened the doors to a scrutiny of historical, textual, sociological, polemical, and visual facts regarding the Jews and their life as a minority among a Christian dominating majority.

It is now time for a re-examination and for the beginning of a re-evaluation.

I. THE "VISIBLE" JEW

During the winter of 1972, in Paris, where I was still a student of Byzantine art history, I had the privilege of meeting Jean Lassus who showed me what he called "a puzzling miniature" from the so-called Christian Topography,⁹ for which he could find no explanation. Folio 76 of Vat Gr. 699 (Fig. 1, color) thus became the starting point of my research. When I told him that on Zacharias's head were obviously *tefilin shel rosh*, precisely drawn, he asked to be explained the difference between the picture and "what he saw on the lintel of the door when he entered," the *mezuzah* he had mistaken for *tefilin*. A little later, Kurt Weitzman¹⁰ mistook *talit* for *tefilin* in the Codex Amiatinus Ezra miniature.¹¹ (Fig. 2, color)

It is evident that the study of the iconography of Jews in Byzantine art, as well as in the Latin medieval world, needs first and foremost an intimate knowledge of Judaism, its history, and traditions. This simple requirement does not differ from any other tentative attempt to understand non-Christian cultures in the Middle Ages. But the situation is not as simple as it seems at first sight. The Byzantine image of the Jew is subject to a few parameters related to the history of the Jewish community in the Byzantine Empire, its habits and decisions. But the study of the image has to take into account the role of art, not as an aesthetic addition to Christian architecture or liturgy, not solely as an illustration of religious texts, but as a document, a witness to reality.

⁹ For a bibliography, see note 30.

¹⁰ K. Weitzman, *Spätantike und Frühchristliche Buchmalerei* (Munich, 1977), 126, fig 48, "als Vorbild benutzt und durch ein Tallith auf dem Kopf und eine Platte mit zwölf Steinen auf der Brust der neuen Bedeutung angepasst."

¹¹ Florence, Bibl. Medic. Laurenziana, Cod. Amiatinus I, c.V, f. 1029, eighth century.

As a feature reflecting *realia*, art can be a faithful copy of an objective reality.¹² But it can also reorganize that reality according to needs advanced by historic events or theological necessities. Art can then be argumentative, polemical, or distortive. And in these cases, the limits between reality and visual commentary may become difficult to trace.

Finally, Byzantine art itself is subject to rules both before and after iconoclasm, rules which frame the work of art into a rigid set of directions, which do not enable it to wander freely and leave little place for originality. Style flows easier than iconography and may hold some of the secrets of changes. Models are essential to preserve the importance of the relation of religious art to the holy prototypes.¹³ It then becomes obvious that earlier models have to be traced. Therefore the study of iconography cannot be restricted to a precise period. Antecedents, whether available or not, and the contacts between cultures are essential to understanding the motives behind a particular work.

It has to be added that the image of Jews in Hebrew medieval manuscripts, partially studied during the last decades,¹⁴ has been and should be even more an important tool of comparison with the Byzantine image. Nonetheless, the “black holes”¹⁵ in the continuity of Jewish art and iconography—mainly following the Muslim conquest and Byzantine iconoclasm—and the scarce span of works remaining after destructions and expulsions of Jewish communities in the Latin West, leave many a quest without answer or solution. The presence of

¹² H. Maguire, “The Profane Aesthetic in Byzantine Art and Literature” *DOP* 53 (1999): 189–205.

¹³ L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclastic Era (680–850): The Sources* (Aldershot, 2001).

¹⁴ E. Revel-Neher, *The Image of the Jew*, 95–100 for an extant bibliography; M. and T. Metzger, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1982); B. Narkiss, “On the Zoophalic Phenomenon in Mediaeval Ashkenazi Manuscripts” in *Norms and Variations in Art: Essays in Honor of Moshe Barash* (Jerusalem, 1983), 49–62; R. Melnikoff, *Anti-Semitic Hate Signs in Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts from Medieval Germany* (Jerusalem, 1999).

¹⁵ The Muslim conquest of Palestine meant a change in the Jewish attitude to figurative art. Already the mosaic of the Jericho synagogue in the seventh century shows a definite turn towards abstraction: the ancient model of Tabernacle-Temple-Zodiac figuration is restricted to a sketchy minimum without any figure whatsoever. See my article “Seeing the Voice: Configuring the Non-Figurable in Jewish Art,” *Ars Judaica* 2 (2006): 7–24, fig. 14. Thereafter, under Muslim rule, Jewish art is aniconic. Byzantine iconoclasm completes these already strong influences and sees art disappear in the Jewish realm under Byzantine rule. See C. Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, 2002).

a detail in Byzantine art may frequently become a trace, a memory, or even proof of a lost Jewish work of art.¹⁶

Research has tackled these questions. Still, very little has been traced to the image of the Jew in Byzantium, which remains a fertile field of knowledge both for the art historian in general, and the historian of Judeo-Christian relationships in particular.

The first known representations of Jews with distinctive features are in the sixth century, which has long been marked as the flourishing period of the arts in the Byzantine empire and of contacts between the communities. This is not to say that earlier iconography did not integrate Jews into its choice of subjects. Narrative neo-Testamentary as well as vetero-Testamentary themes include groups of Jews or biblical figures. They are chosen for their illustrative importance, or, very often, for their typological relevance. They have no distinguishing features which could mark them out. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, or any of the other biblical figures in the Santa Maria Maggiore mosaics in Rome,¹⁷ or elsewhere in painting or manuscript illumination in general from the third to the sixth centuries, do not present physical differences, nor any kind of attribute.

However, the question of costume has to be reconsidered. Nicholas de Lange, in a penetrating study,¹⁸ does not know of "any concrete evidence that Jewish men regularly wore striped shawls such as we see in some Christian icons." Jews—followers of Jesus or opposing groups depicted in Christological cycles of the life of Jesus—wear "striped shawls" very early in Christian art. Already in catacomb art of the third and fourth centuries in Rome, the regular garment of biblical typological figures like Abraham, Jonah, Daniel or others¹⁹ is the *palium* with stripes and dots, the Roman *clavii* and *oculi*, signaling the

¹⁶ K. Schubert, "Jewish Pictorial Traditions in Early Christian Art," in *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity*, eds., H. Schreckenberg and K. Schubert (Minneapolis, 1992), 189–260.

¹⁷ B. Brenk, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken in S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom* (Wiesbaden, 1975).

¹⁸ N. de Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks, or Romans? Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium," in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, ed., D. Smythe (Papers from the Thirty-Second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, 1998), 105–17, and for that quote, page 108.

¹⁹ J. Stevenson, *The Catacombs: Rediscovered Monuments of Early Christianity* (London, 1978).

social position of its bearer.²⁰ In itself, this may have nothing to do with a Jewish costume (so much so that the Bible states only in the Sinaitic legal texts the commandments related to the garment of the Jew, which means that no figure of pre-sinaitic period knew anything about what de Lange calls a “prayer shawl”). However, the discovery of the Judean caves second century *talitot* by Yadin²¹ (Fig. 3, color) has emphasized the use of a specific Jewish garment rooted in biblical injunctions. The discovery led to a focus on the *gamma* system of decoration, long interpreted as a maker’s mark, but shown by Yadin as the original ending of the stripe on the external garment,²² worn by the everyday Jew as a result of biblical injunctions and ending at its corners with fringes, *ziziot*. When compared to Jewish medieval images of *talit* and *zizit*,²³ one is struck by the correlation between them.

These “external garments,” *talitot*, in the depiction of Jews in Byzantium, are rooted in Jewish tradition and archeological facts from the second century. They are also used, at the same time, for Christian protagonists of neo-Testamentary cycles. Apostles wear them²⁴ as Jews of the time and they do appear, as stated by de Lange, late into Byzantine art, on icons but also on mosaics, frescoes, and miniatures. Does this prove anything of an ongoing daily reality of Jewish life well into the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries? Or is it a phenomenon related to the impact of a model, copied over and over again and quickly losing its original significance?

Ziziot, however, do not appear at all in early Christian iconography and later. In fact, they do not exist in any Byzantine work of art which I know of to this day. Totally ignored, they may also mean a non-understanding of the detail, as well as a non-understanding of the relation of the external garment of Jews with Jewish textual sources. They probably were not apparent enough to be striking as a worthwhile

²⁰ R. Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art* (Copenhagen, 1963); C. L. Nauerth “Zur Herkunft der sogenannten Gammadia,” in *Studien zur Spätantiken und Byzantinischen Kunst. Friedrich W. Deichmann gewidmet*. Part 3 (Bonn, 1986), 113–9.

²¹ Y. Yadin, *The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Second Jewish Revolt Against Rome* (Jerusalem, 1972).

²² *Ibid.*, 62–77; Nauerth, “Zur Herkunft der sogenannten Gammadia,” in *Studien zur Spätantiken und Byzantinischen Kunst*, 113–9. The *talit* was the main garment (heb. *begged*) and not a shawl. It takes a shorter form in the Middle Ages when it comes to be worn over the regular medieval garments. Nb. 15: 37–41.

²³ See Fig. 7 (color) and my *The Image of the Jew*, fig. 60–5, p. 97–9.

²⁴ *The Image of the Jew*, fig. 9–11, p. 53–5.

detail. But this, of course, cannot mean that there was no evidence of the “striped shawl” worn regularly by Jews. The garment of the Jew was, in everyday life, meant to be marked by distinctive details, the *ziziot* which were attached to the four corners of any tunic. If today, as well as in the Middle Ages, the *talit* is mainly restricted to the world of prayer in the synagogue, it is true only because of our Western habits of fear and a desire of conformity to the non-Jewish external world. The costume has changed, the biblical halakhic injunctions remain the same. This is rendered evident by the appearance in the streets, among haredi Judaism of Jews in *talitot* or *talit Katan*, (a small *talit*, piece of cloth with four corners and *ziziot* worn inside or over the garment), as a precise fulfillment of the commandment.

In early Jewish art, the frescoes of Dura-Europos²⁵ are a definite sign of obedience to biblical injunctions. Moses has on three, perhaps more occasions, *ziziot* on the corners of his tunic²⁶ (Fig. 4). Jeremiah’s *talit* also shows precisely drawn *ziziot* (Fig. 5, color). This detail, clearly depicted and apparent in Dura, seemed to have been later ignored in early Jewish art. No mosaic in Eretz-Israel has shown it until now. Maybe if the whole figure of Aaron at Sepphoris had been found intact, there would have been *ziziot* at the end of his garment as well as the golden bell in the form of a pomegranate so clearly emphasized by the figuration.²⁷ (Fig. 6, color) The synagogue mosaics discovered until now depict various biblical figures without that detail.²⁸ But Jewish medieval depictions of *talitot* systematically show *ziziot* on the corners of the *talit*²⁹ (Fig. 7, color). Still, they do not appear in medieval Byzantine art.

²⁵ K. Weitzmann and H. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Synagogue of Dura-Europos and Christian Art* (Washington D.C., 1990).

²⁶ In the Exodus panel and two of the upper individual panels.

²⁷ Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue: Deciphering an Ancient Message Through its Archeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* (Jerusalem 2005), 90.

²⁸ Noah, Abraham, and Isaac, with the exception of Daniel in Naaran who has been prey to iconoclasm and is barely legible. David in Gaza is in imperial gear, as *basileus*?

²⁹ See for example, the synagogue scene in the Italian fifteenth-century *Arbaah Turim* in the Vatican Library (Cod.Ross.555, folio 12v) or the Jew in prayer in *Or ha shekel*, Abraham Abulafia, Italy fourteenth-century Rome Bib.Vat.ms.heb.22, folio.

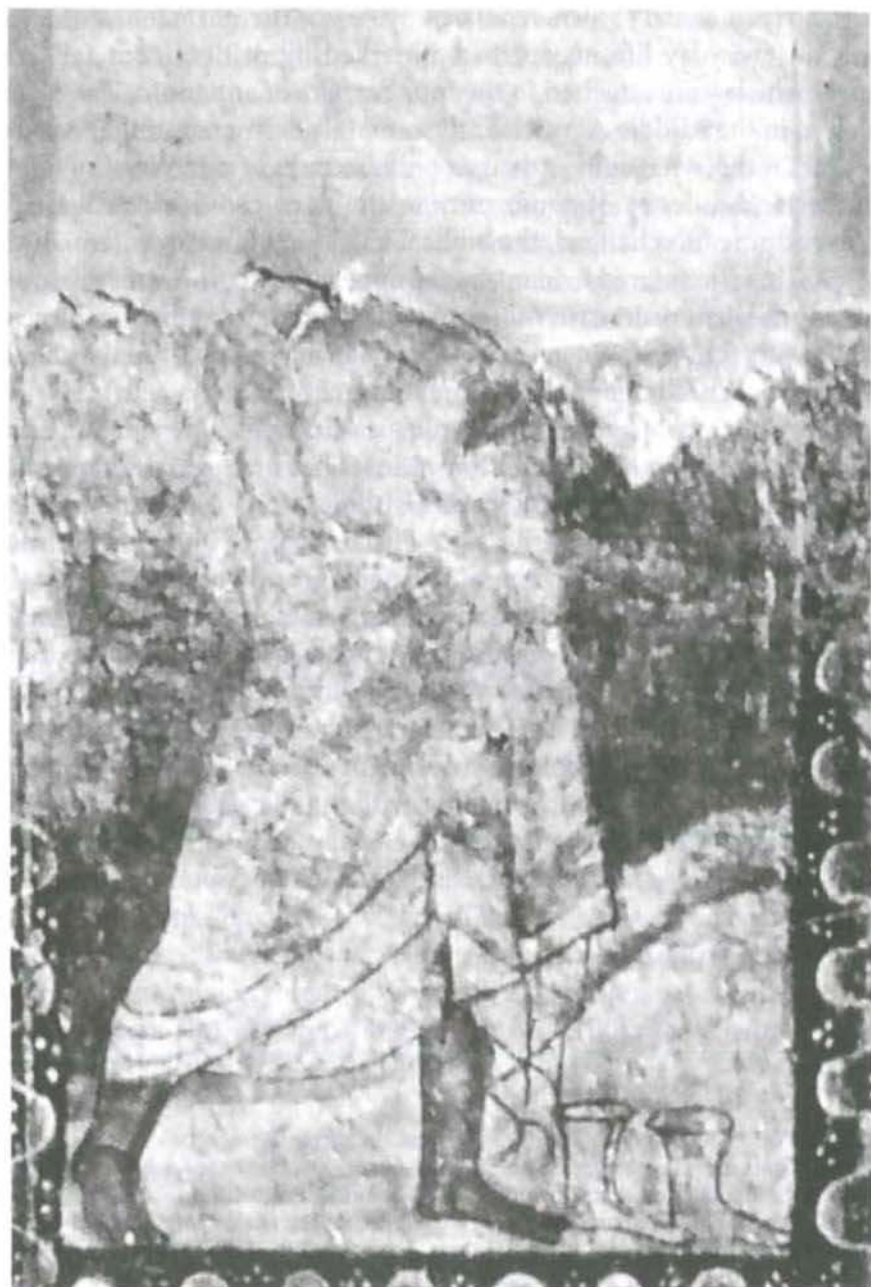


Fig. 4: Dura-Europos synagogue fresco, western wall, individual panel over the Torah shrine, Moses ascending Mount Sinai (photo Gabrielle Sed-Rajna).

II. A SIGN OF IDENTITY

Instead, another detail of the Jewish outer costume was chosen as relevant by Byzantine iconography, bringing us now back to the Christian Topography and folio 66 of Vat Gr. 699, so puzzling to Lassus (Fig. 1, color). The text of the Topography was written in the sixth century by Constantine of Antioch³⁰ who, if he never made it to India, definitely lived in Antioch and had traveled to Palestine which he knew as well as he seems to have known Jews and Judaism.³¹ The existing illustrated manuscripts of the Topography are from the ninth to eleventh centuries.

If correctly recognized—and there is no doubt about it—what did *tefilin* have to do with the priest Zachary, the father of John the Baptist? The beautiful miniature shows the holy Parents, forming the transition between the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New. A group is formed, from left to right, by Mary, Jesus, and John the Prodromos in the middle, holding a book and a long, slim cross, and his parents, Zachary and Elisabeth. In two medallions over them are the busts of Ann and Symeon. Book V, paragraph 175 of the Topography gives a verse corresponding to the prediction about Jesus made by each of them. “Here is the priest Zachary: worthy too, of the gift of prophecy, he exclaimed concerning his son and at the same time talking about our Lord Christ: ‘and you, little child, you will be called prophet of the Almighty; you will precede the Lord and prepare for him his ways’” (Luke 1:76).

The same long paragraph says about John, “High before God, precursor of the Lord to prepare for him a people well disposed, superior to the prophets, predecessor of the apostles, in between Old and New Testament, the last to be still under the Law, he is the one to receive the New Covenant and show to all our Lord Christ’s presence.”³²

The place occupied by this character and the text which frames the miniature together offer a key to understanding it. John is the transitional figure between Old and New. Zachary is the incarnation of

³⁰ W. Wolska-Conus, *La Topographie chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustes* (Paris, 1968–1973). Also “Stephanos d’Athenes et Stephanos d’Alexandrie. Essai d’identification et de biographie,” *REB* 47 (1989): 5–89.

³¹ E. Revel-Neher “Some Remarks on the Iconographical Sources of the Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes,” *Kairos* 32–33 (1990–91): 78–96.

³² Book V, 175.

Old. Bearing a censer and a pyxis, with garments close to those of Melchizedek³³—the ecclesiastic “exotic” vestments—but no classic pseudo-*talit*, he is characterized by his attributes: the liturgical objects he is holding are as much part of the ancient Jewish ritual of *ketoret* in the Temple³⁴ as of the celebration of the Holy Mass in church. According to the New Testament, he was not a Christian priest but a *cohen* of Aharonic descent. The additional attribute of *tefilin*, identifying him specifically as a Jew, wishes to bring him back to his historical-typological task as the incarnation of the Old Law, bringing forth the Prodigios, the link with the new era of christological salvation.

Tefilin, of course, did not characterize only priests (*cohanim*) in the Jewish world. They were a sign of identity for all Jews to wear on forehead and left arm, a sign of faith, voluntarily chosen following the Biblical injunctions. They hold four sections of the *Torah*, centered on the proclamation of the One God, the very core of the Jewish faith.³⁵ “These words” have to be put “as a sign upon thy hand and a frontlet between thine eyes.” The main exposition on the laws of *tefilin* in the Talmud is in the tractate Menahot 34a to 37b. Contrary to modern practice,³⁶ Menahot 36b mentions that *tefilin* were worn throughout the day, from morning to evening, with the exception of the night, Shabbath, and festivals. “He who wears tefilin at night transgresses a positive commandment.”³⁷

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zaccai, who fled the siege of Jerusalem and founded the first Yeshiva in Yavne, never walked four cubits without his *tefilin*³⁸ and so did his disciple Elizer ben Hyrcanus. Does that mean that the habit of wearing *tefilin* during the day was already obsolete and these rabbis an exception? There is a contradiction between the two texts and their emphasis. One can, nevertheless, conclude that during Talmudic times *tefilin* were, a visible—if not constant—sign of recognition of the Jew.

³³ E. Revel-Neher, “The Offerings of the King-Priest: Judeo-Christian Polemics and the Early Byzantine Iconography of Melchizedek” in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem, 2004), 270–300.

³⁴ Z. Weiss, *The Synagogue of Sepphoris*, 73, and fig. 17.

³⁵ Exodus 13:1–10, 11–16; Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21.

³⁶ M. Harl, *La Bible d’Alexandrie*, traduction du texte grec de la Septante, introduction et notes par Cecile Dogniez et Marguerite Harl (Paris, 1992), *Le Deuteronomie*, 6:8, page 155 “ces deux écrins que tout Juif doit porter sur lui au cours de la prière du matin.”

³⁷ T Jer. Ber. 2:3, 4c.

³⁸ Sukkot 28a. TJ Ber 2:3, 4c.

The lack of documentation is made even more apparent and acute by the depiction of *tefilin* in Byzantine art. It cannot be a chance appearance, as the examples are too frequent. It cannot be a confusion with a crown or a decorative headgear, since the depiction is too precise. It is not related to a text, as no discourse on *tefilin* appears with the depictions. Who are the figures bearing it? Does it characterize the Jew as such, or a priest or a leader? Does it appear in response or in reaction to events, polemics, or situations? Is it a sign of identity or is it meant as a negative sign of shame? Is it understood at all or is it a copy? Where and when does it come from—a lost Jewish work of art, a model, or *realia*? Such is the importance of a motif in art that it can enlighten a whole period and change its interpretation.

Tefilin are already mentioned in the letter of Aristeeus³⁹ but only those of the arm. Josephus⁴⁰ mentions forehead *tefilin* before arm. The Greek term *phylacterion*, coined by the Septuaginta for the Hebrew *totaphot*, is in use in the New Testament and prevails in later Christian textual sources.

In his Gospel, Mathew not only knows and recognizes them as part of the external appearance of Jews, but gives an original interpretation of their size: "But all their works they do to be seen of men. *They make broad their phylacteries*".⁴¹

In the middle of the second century, Justin also mentions the custom of wearing *tefilin* for the Jews of his time.⁴² The *Dialogue* is the source for the accusation of deicide,⁴³ thus rendering its author one of the basic pillars of "Christian anti-Semitism."⁴⁴

Both the language of the evangelist and the early texts of Christianity equate "phylacteries" with the Phariseans' desire to appear as more virtuous in the eyes of others. In itself, this could be a reason to associate the image of Jews with the *tefilin*, not a sign of pride in their faith in the One God, but of an excessive and showy pride in the value of their own false piety.

³⁹ 159. See A. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1959), 348ff. The letter appears at the beginning of the Octateuchs and includes a miniature.

⁴⁰ *Ant Jud.* 4: 213.

⁴¹ *Mat.* 23:5.

⁴² *Dial.* 46,5.

⁴³ *Dial* 17,1 and 136,2.

⁴⁴ M. Simon, *Versus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135-425)* (Oxford, 1986), 246ff.

The obvious demonstrative nature of the commandments, stated by Mathew, is confirmed by the rabbinic interpretation of the verse "and all the people of the earth shall see that the name of the Lord is called upon thee" (Deut 28:10), referring to forehead *tefilin*.⁴⁵

Tefilin found in Qumran⁴⁶ (Fig. 8) attest to the use and similarity of these early examples to the Talmudic ones. From Qumran to the Christian Topography, hundreds of years may have passed but the depiction remains close to the model, the obvious sign of identity "marking" the Jews.

The Byzantine world never knew or asked for a physical means of identification of its Jews, such as the badge imposed on Western Jewry by the decisions of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Still, it has to be remembered that an objective situation was in place in the first centuries:⁴⁷ if Jews wore *tefilin* in the street, they became an inseparable part of their outside appearance, quite different and seemingly strange from the general appearance of people at that time. The *tefilin shel rosh*, the only one represented in Byzance, would have been apparent to everyone and thus must have been obviously clear. Non-imposed and voluntarily chosen, it differentiated the Jew's physical appearance from the Christian and called for attention.

When did that practice—a visible obedience to a commandment of faith—change into a restriction of donning *tefilin* only at morning prayers, at home or in the synagogue? There seems to be no clear answer yet. There was a discourse among the sages concerning the lack of continuity in the commandment of a general donning of *tefilin*.⁴⁸ Still, Rabbis and scholars used to wear *tefilin* during the day later on in time and there are examples well known and documented.⁴⁹ Distinguished by their piety, they were recognizable and sometimes endangered by that sign. Because of the danger of persecutions and death, during the Middle Ages, the obedience of some other *mizvot* were also restricted. One of them is the decision to authorize placing the Hanukkah lamp inside the house, instead of lighting it on the porch. It seems

⁴⁵ Ber. 6a.

⁴⁶ Y. Yadin, *Tefillin from Qumran* (Jerusalem, 1969).

⁴⁷ Jerome, Galit. 4:22 "Jews of his time feared to appear in public in towns for they attracted attention."

⁴⁸ Shab.130a; "The precept is still weak with them." R.H. 17a: "A head which does not wear *tefillin* is of a willful sinner of Israel."

⁴⁹ In the eighteenth century Yonathan Eybeschutz of Altona, and the Gaon of Vilna in the nineteenth century, wore *tefillin* during the whole day.



Fig. 8: *Tefillin*, interior of the capsule showing the four slips, found in Qumran (after Yadin).

that the same reasons, in face of the aggression of the Christian world, led to a similar decision regarding *tefilin*.

A desire to characterize Jews and accentuate their identification in the early centuries may be compared with the renewal of the position and importance of *cohanim* in the Jewish society of Late Antiquity.⁵⁰ Oded Irshai cites *en passant* a passage from the *Dialogue*⁵¹ where Justin Martyr, easily inclined, as already noted, to aggressive language regarding Jews, argues that the high priests send their envoys to the people of the world and abuse Christianity. The confusion between sages, rabbis, and *cohanim* is frequent in Christian patristics.⁵² In Byzantine art, images of Jews recognizable through their *tefilin* include Aaron⁵³ (Fig. 9, color), sometimes Moses,⁵⁴ Aaron's sons⁵⁵ (Fig. 10, color), and Old testament priests in mariological cycles⁵⁶ (Fig. 11, color). The form of these *tefilin* differs from one another: some bear a close resemblance to the actual Jewish model, others are drawn in a set of variations on types of headgear, sometimes far removed from the original.

III. OLD AND NEW

The earliest examples of *tefilin* appear around the sixth century. The chronology of the Talmud and the intense discussion of *tefilin* in tractate *Menahot* may justify Christian interest in this commandment. The visual depiction must have propagated through the phenomenon of model and copy. After the twelfth century, this model was no longer applicable and the image was reproduced with variations and changes which leave it nearly unidentifiable.⁵⁷

No such sign of identification exists in the frescoes of Dura, in which Aaron's figure in the panel of the consecration of the Tabernacle does

⁵⁰ O. Irshai, "The Priesthood in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity," in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem 2004), 67–107.

⁵¹ 1, 17 and 2, 108.

⁵² Irshai, "The Priesthood," 74–5.

⁵³ Octateuch Rome, Vat.gr.746, fol 241, 283, 342. Octateuch, Rome, vat.gr. 747, fol 106. Homilies of Jacob Kokkinobaphos, Rome, Bibl Vat.gr. 1162, fol 133v.

⁵⁴ Christian Topography, Rome Vat. Gr 699, fol 48.

⁵⁵ Octateuch, Rome, Vat. Gr. 746, fol 242 v.

⁵⁶ Santa Maria, Castelseprio, Trial by Water. Ochrid. St Clement, icon of the presentation of Mary.

⁵⁷ Mistra, church of the Peribleptos. Decani, church of the Holy Virgin.

not have *tefilin* or even *ziziot*.⁵⁸ Would in fact Aaron in Sepphoris have had *tefilin* on his forehead, as he had bells on the end of his garment and as the high priest depicted in the Christian Topography (Fig. 12, color)? Even the biblical high priest wore *tefilin* between *tsits* and *mitsnefet*.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, in the very explicit commentary which accompanies the illustration, the Christian Topography does not make any allusion to *tefilin*.⁶⁰

It seems that the opposition between Old and New lies at the basis of this desire of identification. A desire to characterize *cohanim* as representatives of Jews may have led the use of the only sign of identification actually known. Byzantium after iconoclasm does not make use and does not recognize caricature or distorted physical descriptions as part of its visual vocabulary. Language, habits, and prayers are impossible to translate into images. To visually qualify the Jews, only vestimentary details remain. These may have been indicative of an opposition, they may even have reflected a kind of moralization. Instead of trying to find distortions and caricature, the images remain faithful witnesses to a reality which texts do not let us grasp. Thus the characterization happens through an attribute with no fundamental negative connotations. However, this same attribute of identification served in the Gospel of Mathew to "mark" Pharisees, e. g. enemies of Jesus. It is quite possible that the reason, which stood at the starting point of the depiction, turned out to be forgotten later and the model copied automatically without understanding. It can then be compared to the same phenomenon in engravings of the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries where *tefilin* drawn by non-Jews⁶¹ are often not understood.

IV. JEWS SHOULD LIVE OPENLY

Certain hypocritical adherents of the Jewish religion, in the desire of mocking Christ our Lord, pretend to be Christians... we have decided

⁵⁸ S. Laderman, "A New Look at the Second Register of the West Wall in Dura Europos," *Cahiers Archeologiques* 45 (1997): 5-18.

⁵⁹ Rashi on Exodus 28,37. *Zeba'him* 19. *Mishne Tora*, *Hil'hot Kle Hamiqdahs* X,3.

⁶⁰ 59 "Sur le front, le prêtre portait une mitre et sur la mitre un (galon) bleu, en guise de bordure, avec un diadème d'or où était gravé le sceau de consécration au Seigneur, c'est-à-dire ce qu'on appelle le tétragramme; ainsi vêtu, le prêtre entrait dans le sanctuaire." Book V, 45-8.

⁶¹ D. Sperber, *Customs of Israel, Sources and History*, Vol. 6 (Jerusalem, 1998), chap. 2, fig. 1-9 (Hebrew).

that they should be admitted neither to communion, nor to prayers, nor to the Church, but that the Jews should live openly, following their own religion. If any of them converts of his own free will, then accept that individual and baptize him. (Canon 8, Nicea II)

Jews should live openly, states the Nicean canon. They can be recognized as such, including their differences and otherness. Post-iconoclastic art reflects that view and refrains from negative images, at the same time as they flourish in Western art. The frequency of the appearance of *tefilin* in Byzantine art can and must shed light on the visual evidence of the sign of identity. The relation between the biblical injunction (to wear them as part of the external appearance of the Jew) and their restriction to morning prayers is unclear. But the iconography is a proof—and must be interpreted as such—that at a certain point in time, Jews appeared in the Byzantine street wearing *tefilin* on their forehead. Their appearance in the Christian Topography and the intimate contact of Constantine of Antioch with the land and the customs of the Jews⁶² makes this hypothesis probable. The sixth-century archetype, of which traces exist only through its copies, may then have conveyed the image further on, until it dissolved into deformations (Fig. 13, color).

V. BLACK AND WHITE

Yet another depiction was chosen in Byzance to illustrate the conflict between Judaism and Christianity. From the ninth century on, the model of *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione* and *Ecclesia ex Gentibus* as two identical women in Sta Sabina and Sta Pudenziana in Rome,⁶³ is replaced by the dual allegory of Church and Synagogue.

One of the oldest and most important themes in the polemical dialogue between Christianity and Judaism,⁶⁴ it becomes an obvious visual depiction during the Middle Ages, from book covers and liturgical objects to miniatures in illuminated manuscripts and full length sculptures on the portals of Gothic cathedrals. To say that this has been one

⁶² See my paper "Jews, Judaism and Jewish Sources in the iconography of the Christian Topography" (Congress of Byzantine Studies, Jerusalem, 2007).

⁶³ H. Kessler and J. Zacharias, *Rome 1300: In the Path of the Pilgrim* (New Haven, 2000), 107,183.

⁶⁴ Ps. Augustinus, *De Altercatione Ecclesiae et Synagogae Dialogus*, PL 42,1131–40. For Byzantium, Cyril of Alexandria, *De Synagogae Defectu*, PG 86, 1421–24.

of the deeply scrutinized themes of medieval iconography is clearly *surfait*. The scholars of Western medieval art have thoroughly ignored the Byzantine aspects of the figuration. Very few even relate to the theme *en passant*.⁶⁵

The question of the antecedents of the formula and of its first appearance, whether in the West or in the East, has been raised as the only interesting point of comparison between what was simply considered as parallel traditions.

What should have been more important is the significance of the allegory, in two entirely different worlds, in two entirely different sets of relationships, of interaction and dialogue. Undoubtedly, the allegorical couple cannot be understood if it is not studied in the framework of a broader examination of the image of the Jew in Byzantium. Following the path just opened, examining the Byzantine allegory of Church and Synagogue will add upon our previous remarks.

Two schemas exist, differing in time, iconography, and context. Still, they have common features, common attitudes and a common interpretation, which divert them entirely from the Western path.

An Allegory of Two Eras

The first composition, which is also the earliest one, is intimately woven into the Crucifixion scene and finds antecedents in Carolingian art, which may be its origin. In the ninth-century Carolingian book covers⁶⁶ (Fig. 14), standing to the left of the cross, next to John,

⁶⁵ P. Hildenfänger, "La figure de la Synagogue dans l'art du Moyen-Age," *Revue des Etudes Juives*, XLVII (1903): 187-96; H. Pflaum, *Die Religiöse Disputation in der Europäischen Dichtung des Mittelalters: Der Allegorische Streit zwischen Synagoge und Kirche* (Geneva, 1935); M. Schlauch, "The Allegory of Church and Synagogue," *Speculum* 14 (1929): 448-64; B. Blumenkrantz, "Altercatio Aecclesie contra Synagogam" *RMAL* 10 (1954): 1-160 and idem "Synagoga: Mutation d'un motif de l'iconographie," in *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzky*, eds., A. Caquot, M. Iladas-Lebel, J. Riaud (Paris, 1986), 349-55; L. Grodecki, "Les Vitraux allégoriques de Saint Denis," in *Art de France*, ed., L. Grodecki (Paris, 1961) 19-46; W. S. Seiferth, *Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages: Two Symbols in Art and Literature* (Munich, 1970, first ed, 1964 in German); A. Linder, "Ecclesia and Synagoga in the Medieval Myth of Constantine the Great," *Revue Belge d'Histoire et de Philosophie* 54 (1976): 1019-60. Although my book on the image of the Jew in Byzantium appeared in Oxford in 1992 and included a chapter on Church and Synagogue (note 7 and 88-95), it was not mentioned in B. Kühnel, "The Personifications of Church and Synagogue in Byzantine Art: Towards a History of the Motif," in *Jewish Art* 19-20 (1994): 12-24.

⁶⁶ Seiferth, *op. cit.* fig. 1-9.



Fig. 14: Carolingian Ivory, school of Metz (after Seiferth).

a feminine figure with long garment and veiled head-cover, turns her back on the crucified Jesus or moves away, sometimes even quitting the frame of the picture. In some examples⁶⁷ she turns back, longingly, waiting perhaps to be called back, or still alternately trying to understand the meaning of the event. Prudentius gives the textual background for this detail "*Judea... faciem retro detorsit.*"⁶⁸ Another figure stands to the right of the cross, next to Mary, garbed in the same clothes as the woman on the left, but carrying a eucharistic chalice and banner of victory. Their attitudes are different and so is their movement. Attributes, if they exist, are minor and do not constitute an obvious difference. The emphasis is elsewhere: one of them is moving away, the other proudly standing her ground.

The Carolingian ivory book covers have indeed parallels in Byzantine art, as early as the end of the tenth century and mainly in provincial art. A Georgian quadrilobed enamel cross⁶⁹ (Fig. 15, color), repeats the pattern quite exactly: on both sides of the cross, two identically garbed women stand. As the one on the right of Jesus proudly receives his blood in a chalice, the other, head bowed, shamefully turns her back on the scene. According to the already ancient schema of crucifixion scenes, two angels hover in the sky, on both sides of the cross.

From this early example, a further step is taken in the Paris Gospel Gr. 74.⁷⁰ Three different pages expose three developments of the episode of the Crucifixion⁷¹ according to the Gospel of Mathew. On folio 59 (Fig. 16), the theme of the two women is expanded in a new and original variation. Instead of standing on the two sides of the cross, in opposite attitudes, they appear, hovering in the sky, halfway between the angels over the crossbar and the group of soldiers at the foot of the cross. On the right of Jesus, a haloed long and slender feminine figure seems to be climbing up, lightly propelled on the back of her neck by an angel, in such a quick move that his wings are dressed upwards. On the left of Jesus, the stockier figure without a halo lifts her arms in the ancient gesture of sorrow. The angel literally pushes her out,

⁶⁷ Revel-Neher, op. cit. fig. 82.

⁶⁸ PL 60, 319.

⁶⁹ Shemokmedi Monastery, about 957. Today in the Georgian Museum of Art at Tbilissi.

⁷⁰ Dated from the last quarter of the eleventh century.

⁷¹ Folios 58v, 59r and v.

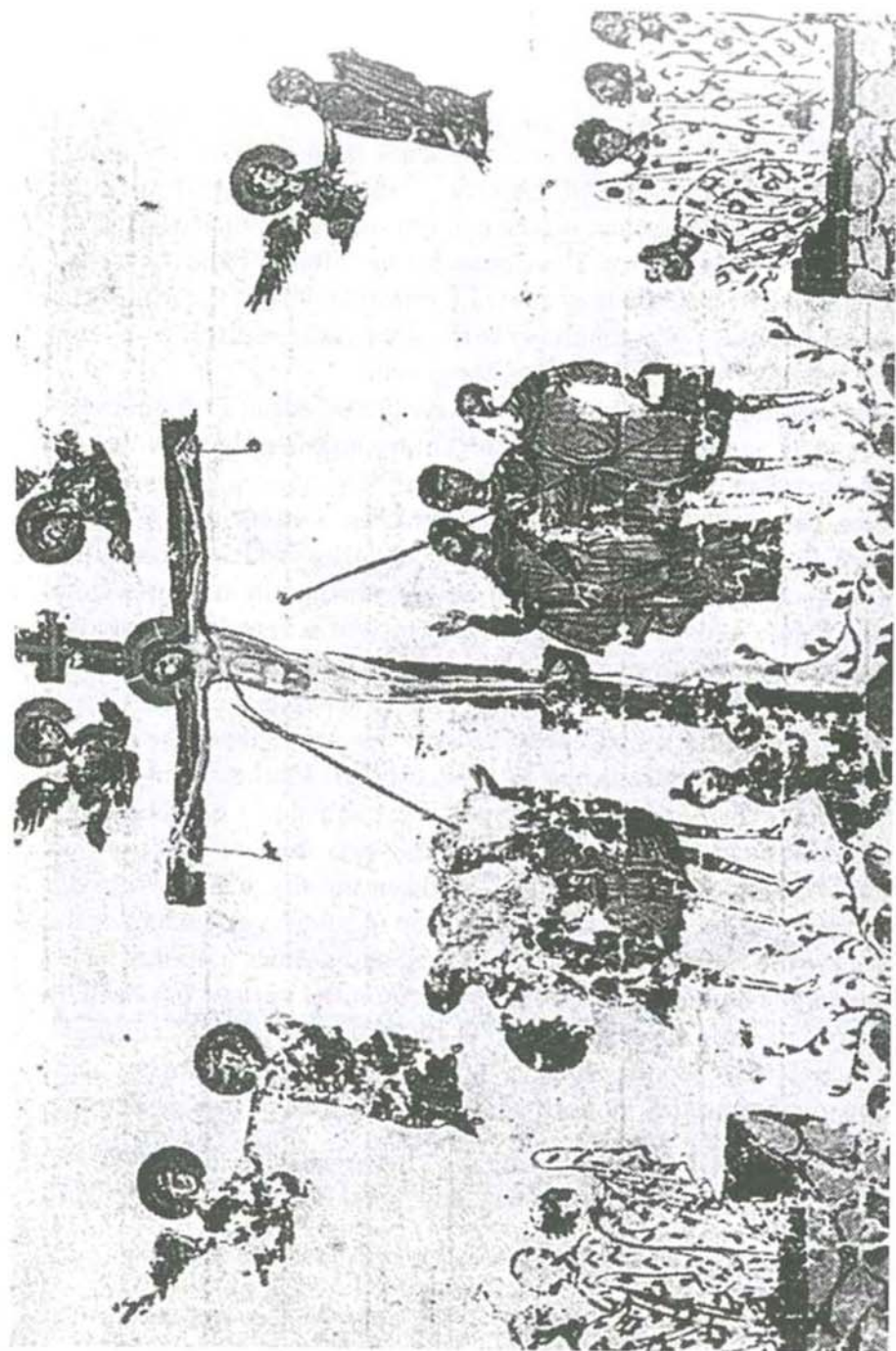


Fig. 16: Paris, Bibl. Nationale de France Gr. 74, fol. 59.

with great effort, hand on her shoulders and wings horizontally outstretched, suggesting her opposition to the drama of her expulsion.

The group of confronted women has now moved away from the paralleled depiction of a voluntary participation (for the church, receiving the Eucharistic blood) and of a negation of the event (the synagogue, walking away). It has turned into an invitation and its acceptance to come closer, on one side, and a forcible expulsion (*volens, nolens*) on the other side. Instead of voluntarily choosing her attitude and walking away in incomprehension or refusal, Synagogue (who still has no attribute whatsoever) is *manu militari* pushed away in the very form of a physical expulsion.

The sense of drama is completely different, since it is carried out by angels, divine messengers; it is as much part of God's plan, as the expulsion from Paradise from which it takes its form.⁷² However, Adam is the one being pushed out by the angel in the scene of the expulsion from Paradise and here it is a feminine figure, standing alone and isolated. Was the appearance of this figuration in Carolingian art triggered by the introduction of the *Oratio pro perfidis Judaeis* or by sermons and teachings of the likes of Agobard and Amulo?⁷³

The literary background of the feminine allegory goes back to the text of Song of Songs and the allegory of the bride. A symbol of God's love for his people, the personification of Israel is a betrothed woman whose beauty is translated into poetic terms.⁷⁴ In medieval art and thought, she becomes Mary-Ecclesia and leads to the image of the crowned bride sitting next to Jesus, a figuration, important to recall, unknown to Byzantine art.⁷⁵ And so, the triumphant, beautiful Ecclesia finds its source primarily in *Canticum*.

⁷² See in M. Meir, *The Image of Women in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts from the Tenth to the Twelfth Centuries*, (unpublished PHD dissertation), 62–105 fig. 58–63, and K. Weitzmann and M. Bernabo *The Byzantine Octateuchs* (Princeton, 1999), 39–42, fig. 99–102. Also now Mati Meyer, *An Obscure Portrait: Imaging Women's Reality in Byzantine Art* (London, 2009), *passim*.

⁷³ The influence of the aggressively anti-Jewish liturgy or ecclesiastical sermons on iconographical changes cannot be ignored. See for example R. Chazan *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Anti-Semitism* (Berkeley, 1997).

⁷⁴ S. Shalev-Eyni, "Iconography of Love. Illustrations of Bride and Bridegroom in Ashkenazi Prayer Books of the 13th and 14th centuries," *Studies in Iconography* 26 (2005): 27–57.

⁷⁵ Medieval Jewish iconography shows the bride in the illustration of the liturgical poem (*piyyut*) opening with the verses of Song of Songs 4:8, in the same attitude as the Virgin in the Coronation scene. S. Shalev-Eyni, *op. cit.* fig. 1-2-3.

The opposed figure—inexistent in *Canticum* in which the text refers only to the Spouse—has another textual source. The book of Lamentations reads in terms of mourning and desolation, comparing Jerusalem to a woman. Her crown has fallen down,⁷⁶ the crown of a queen or the crown of a *tyche*, and her eyes are blinded⁷⁷ by the tears shed in the face of the horror she witnesses during the fall of the city. The text is a terrible testimony (written before the destruction of the Temple and subsequent exile) to the *'Hurban*.

Jeremiah, in the Christian typological interpretation of the Bible, is the prophet whose vision coined the term of a New Covenant (*Brit 'Hadasha*), thus announcing, according to Christian theology, the coming of the new faith and of the Church. Although again, as in Song of Songs, there is only one feminine figure. Chapter 31 calls for the figuration of a triumphant personification of the New Covenant replacing the Old one.

“See, days are coming, says the Lord, when I shall conclude with the house of Israel and the house of Judah a new covenant, which is not going to be like the covenant I concluded with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to pull them out of the land of Egypt.”⁷⁸

The idea of Old and New stressed here by Jeremiah in terms which appealed to the needs of prophetic archetypes in Christian theology, this very idea remained the biblical reference to the Old Testament typology of the New Testament.

The Pauline allegory of Galatians⁷⁹ is based both on Jeremiah's vision and on the text of Genesis:

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written:

⁷⁶ Lam. 5:16.

⁷⁷ Lam. 5:17.

⁷⁸ A. Neher, *Jeremie*, (Paris, first ed.1960—1980—1998).

⁷⁹ *Galatians* IV, 21–31.

“Be glad, O barren woman who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.”

You, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son now born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does the Scripture say? “Get rid (drive out = *garesh*) of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman. (Galatians IV, 21–31)

The textual motif of the two covenants and the “driving out” (meaning casting out, nullifying, erasing) of one of them, symbolizing the world of slavery, has been expanded in patristic literature. It functioned as the theological background for the overthrowing of Judaism, for expulsions, persecutions, forced conversions, and murders. Augustine sees the Jews as *testes veritatis*, witnesses of the truth, and at the same time understands as a theological truth their expulsion from their homeland and dispersion.⁸⁰

Walter Cahn, in the article quoted as introduction to this study, saw a depiction of an actual expulsion of the Jews by Ambrose, on the twelfth-century relief of the Porta Romana in Milan.⁸¹

Galatians is also the framework for the literary and then visual motif of the double allegory of Church and Synagogue, increasingly popular in medieval art from the end of the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. In the Pseudo-Augustine *De Altercatione Ecclesiae et Synagogae* “the personified Church cites the Jew’s degradation as a proof of her divine election in the place of a discredited Synagogue.” The fifth-century Cyril of Alexandria’s *De Synagoge Defectu* completes the patristic picture in the same harsh terms of degradation and defalliance.⁸²

However, we have to be aware that in the Paris Gospel Gr. 74, the miniature is not an illustration of Galatians, nor does it refer to one of these patristic texts. It is an illustration of the Gospel of Mathew

⁸⁰ *De Civitate Dei* 4,34, 18, 18.

⁸¹ Cahn op. cit. note 1. Relief from the Porta Romana (1171) Milan, Castello Sforzesco. Fig. 4–5.

⁸² B. Blumenkrantz, *Juifs et Chrétiens, Patristique et Moyen Age* (London, 1977), 230–7ff.

and a depiction of a Crucifixion, probably influenced, as Weitzmann thought, by a Lectionary.⁸³

Differing from the Carolingian model, the opposition between the two Covenants is an extrapolation reflected in an image emphasizing a theological antagonism, solved by divine intervention. Later, Western art will create, in scarce and specific examples, the theme of the unveiling of Synagogue, a happy-end based also on Paul's *aufertur velamen*, non-existent in Byzantine art.

The second composition is totally independent from the Crucifixion narrative and its symbolism. It has an original life flowing freely in depictions which give no descriptive textual background. It is independent from Western formulations and as such can be established as an original Byzantine creation.

The chronological gap between Greek patristic texts and their iconography in Byzantine art is well known to scholars of Byzantium. The earliest illustration of Gregory Nazianzenus, who lived and wrote in the fourth century, is known to us from two ninth-century copies.⁸⁴ In the eleventh century, a selection of sixteen homilies was put together to be read on feast days. In five illuminated manuscripts, the second schema for the theme of Church and Synagogue illustrates the third Homily.

And so, the new theme of Church introduced and Synagogue evicted by angels, either with or independent of the Crucifixion, appears at about the same time (somewhere around the eleventh century) in different manuscripts. Galavaris⁸⁵ already sought a liturgical influence on the development of the figuration.⁸⁶

The third Homily is read on the "New Sunday," the first Sunday after Easter. The text at the beginning makes reference to the Encaenia.⁸⁷ The content of the homily refers also to "the old dispensation (decrees) succeeded by a new life deriving from Christ's death and resurrection."⁸⁸

⁸³ See E. Mayan-Fanar, *Byzantine Pictorial Initials of the Post-Iconoclastic Period From the End of the Ninth Century to the Early Eleventh Century*, (Jerusalem, 2003, unpublished Ph.D Diss.), chap. 2, for the early decoration of lectionaries and homilies.

⁸⁴ The Paris BNF Gr. 510, still in the throes of being published in a facsimile edition, and the Ambrosiana 49-50 in Milan.

⁸⁵ G. Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzenus* (Princeton, 1969).

⁸⁶ Galavaris, op. cit. 97.

⁸⁷ The day is the feast of the consecration of the Church in general, the origin of which was the dedication of the S Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

⁸⁸ Galavaris, 96. PG 36, 608ff.

The terms *Old* and *New* are the key to our understanding of the theme, as it was for the image of the Jew in general in Byzantium.⁸⁹

There is a need to reorganize the dating of the illustrated Homilies after Galavaris. The London 24381, fol 2 is probably the earliest, but it is badly flaked and difficult to read clearly. Under a velum serving as a ciborium and uniting the two opposed figurations under the same emphasis, the church (there is still the common denomination for the new era), haloed, stands before what seems like an altar with two crosses inscribed on its outside face and crowned by a ciborium. The rest of an angel's wings are behind her. The violent eviction of the synagogue, the other woman on the right, by an angel with raised hands, is legible. They stand behind the nearly identical altar-like architecture from which she is going to depart soon, her hunched shoulders marking the defeat. Parallels and differences are clear.

On folio 22 of the Paris Coislin 239 (Fig. 17) probably from the twelfth century, the church, clothed in light color, stands alone on the left, holding a little model of a basilica. Over her, a little angel floats in the sky. It is the synagogue who stands before a tall and large building which entirely covers the background and has an elevated dome on top of it. Standing before this sophisticated architecture an angel pushes the feminine figure in the back towards the exterior frame of the miniature. Clothed in deep green, she turns her head back, lightly fighting his push. There is a significant difference between the little basilica-church held by the figure in light colors and the heavy obvious structure backing the dark synagogue. The latter is also clearly smaller than the tall church figure. The architectural opposition between the figures is unsolved. The identification of the building behind the synagogue as the Temple does not explain the differences in size and the presence of the dome. Or else could it read as the Holy Sepulchre?

In the Mt Athos Dyonisiou 61 ms, on fol 17 (Fig. 18, color), the figuration is coupled with a double scene representing S Mamas—suggesting the homily delivered in his church and the deposition of his relics. The church in red is on the right and the synagogue in dark

⁸⁹ The Quinisext council in Trullo of 692 refers to symbols of light and shadow, eras of Grace and Law; the latter was abandoned in visual depictions. There are no more Old Testament themes in Byzantine monumental painting until the Mariological cycles of the fourteenth century. See Grodecki, *op. cit.* (note 63) for the Western literary sources of the theme, which could well be in this case a reinterpretation of an aggressive Western formula.

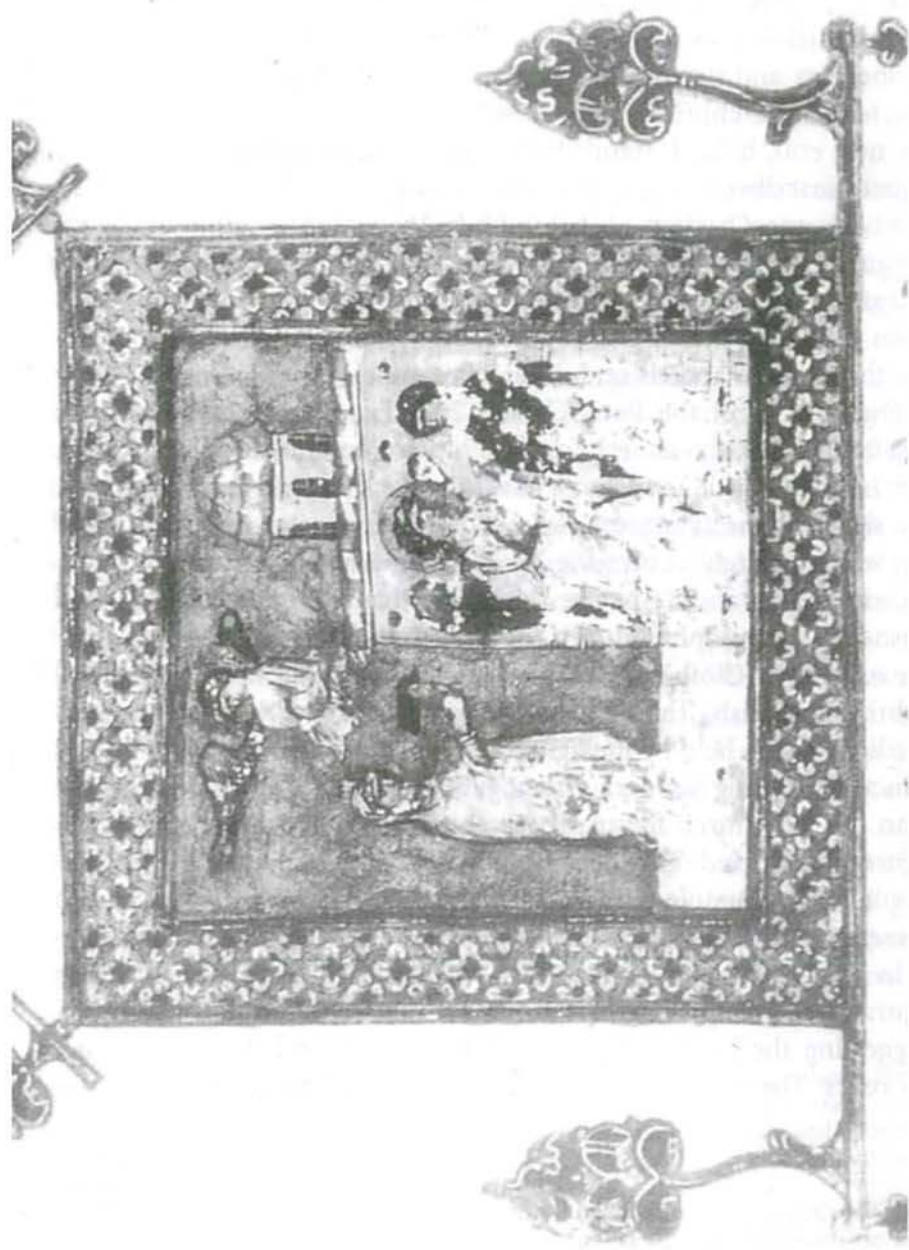


Fig. 17: Paris, Bibl. Nationale de France Coislin 239, fol. 22.

brown stands in half-body pose on a tower with a window. The church figure is taller and it is she who seems to exit the architectural frame, an angel holding her by the shoulders. The smaller synagogue nearly disappears under her angel and lowers her head. There is no real difference between the two buildings and no woman is more at ease in them, nor do they convey a special meaning. But the opposition of size and color between the two women is obvious and of course important.

Gregory—the author of the Homily, appears alone before a group of listeners in the Athos Pantelemeion ms. on fol. 30 (Fig. 19, color) Before him, another compact group within its center a cupola-ciborium including a possible entry (door) at its left. An angel brings the church, clothed in white-blue, forward to Gregory. Another angel in a violent movement pushes the synagogue, clothed in black and brown, and who does not seem to want to move, towards the outside of the miniature. The architecture is very close to the church in the Coislin 239, and this means again that relying on the seemingly different architectural forms does not constitute a meaningful element in understanding the figurations.

What may be considered as the final phase of the formula (and has to be reconsidered again in the light of changes in the dating of the ms) appears in an initial of Paris Gr. 550 fol 30 (Fig. 20). Now synagogue is evicted by the church herself, without the help of an angel. They appear above the tall figure of Gregory, preaching to a group of assistants, a book in hand. The church is in clear colors, the synagogue in dark, the church has a halo, the synagogue does not; the church pushes the synagogue by the shoulders, the latter is passive.

Basically, in the different manuscripts, the formula remains the same. But an attentive reading permits the scrutiny of details which are significant. The symbolism of the architecture in the miniatures and their relations with the figures has sometimes been noted by scholars of the manuscripts. The opposition of colors, the presence of acting angels, and the progression in the formula itself, were generally ignored.

The whole scene, instead of appearing midway between sky and earth as in the Paris Gospel Gr. 74 crucifixion, is now firmly planted on the ground in an architectural setting with one exception in Gr. 550. One or two angels act as "ushers," guiding the two feminine protagonists in and out. There are no attributes to these figures, who are differentiated only by the color of their (identical) garments and by their attitude. There are no tituli, no text identifies them, not in the Homily, and not in the miniature. What we have here is an extrapolation, this time not in a written text but in iconography.



Fig. 20: Paris, Bibl. Nationale de France Gr. 550, fol. 30.

The Carolingian synagoga and the Pauline allegory help in the process of identification of these nameless figures. But, for example, the lower part of the Italian Berlin ivory,⁹⁰ also from the eleventh century, wants to name *ecclesia* and *synagoga* properly, as well as the angel (*angelos*) next to the latter. Has the theme been so obvious in Byzantium that there was no need for names or attributes? Or even better, are we reading church (*ekklesia*) and synagogue (*synagogué*) in miniatures where Old and New are meant? An allegory of two eras, this is not a couple of personifications identified as in the Paris Psalter 139. In Byzantium, Jews if they appear as a group, are not identified as such.⁹¹

In these examples of the liturgical link of the figuration with a text, it appears that the differences overcome the resemblances. The representation is quite free, and has no direct connection with a narrative. The main emphasis is on the recurrence of the eviction gesture emphasized by the opposition of colors. Old and New, black and white, dark and light, are opposed. At the final end, one of them wins; she acts independently, very much as in the Creation scenes of the Octateuques, following Hellenistic figurations, where light-day wins over dark-night.⁹²

When the theme moves to mural church paintings, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it seems to go back to the framework of the Crucifixion scene. The explicit or implicit connotation related to the crucifixion theme is not enough to explain the change.

But as is well known, Byzantine church iconography, which cannot figure the two women on the portal of transepts as in Strasbourg, Reims, Trier,⁹³ or so many other gothic cathedrals, evolves in the exclusive framework of the *Dodekaorton*. There is no other way to introduce the allegoric couple of Old and New, than to integrate it into a scene related to the feasts of the *Dodekaorton*. Hence, the inclusion of the theme into the Crucifixion scene, an inclusion for which ancient Western models, Carolingian and even Georgian, exist and were already used. But at this point, the formula of the Homilies serves Byzantine art better than the ancient formula of the Carolingian duo at the foot of the

⁹⁰ H. Kessler, "An Eleventh-Century Ivory Plaque from South Italy and the Cassinese Revival," *Studies in Pictorial Narrative* (London 1994): 479–507, fig. 1.

⁹¹ On the contrary, Western art identifies by name the *Judei*, boiling in the pots of Hell in the Hortus Deliciarum of the learned Herrade von Landsberg.

⁹² See Weitzmann and Bernabo as in note 71.

⁹³ Revel-Neher, *The Image of the Jew*, 106–8, fig. 83–9.

cross. The theme of the angelic eviction has become essential, because like the expulsion from paradise—and unlike the expulsion of Jews in the West—it emphasizes the divine plan. Thus, it becomes added again like in Paris Gospel Gr. 74 to the Crucifixion scene. Whether in Kastoria at the Mavriotissa—where the church receives the blood from the wound or in Paphos, Studenitsa (Fig. 21, color), Ochrid or Zemen, Syrian 559 or the Armenian Gospel in which the angel seizes the dark woman's crown, the scheme remains the same: angels bringing in or evicting figures, opposed figures in the upper part of the crucifixion scene, opposition of movement and color. It is the eviction of Old and the entrance of New. But the additions of attributes, chalice and crown for the church, an angel seizing the crown of the synagogue in the Matenadaran Gospels of the fourteenth century, are all influences of Western topics already well tested in Western models. In the Abu Gosh twelfth-century painting, a Byzantine model leaves its traces: Ecclesia is no longer visible, but the plain Synagogue is pushed at the shoulders and turning back, a banner falling from her hand (an attribute totally unknown by Byzantium). The identification is the Western one, adding⁹⁴ the Latin titulus *synagoga* on a white banderole over the falling banner and the head of the synagogue. No tituli, as we have seen, exist in Byzantine art. Again the Byzantine original formula undergoes important—and as yet unnoticed—Western changes.

There is no need to look for specific local anti-Semitic events for these changes.⁹⁵ The Crusader period has long been recognized as the trigger for the alteration in the attitude of Western art towards Jews and Judaism, since the end of the eleventh century.⁹⁶

The liturgy of the New Sunday is read on the first Sunday after Easter. The Byzantine illustration of the Homilies of Gregory dates from the eleventh and twelfth century. In twelfth-century Europe, the

⁹⁴ According to the watercolor copies by de Piellat published by G. Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Berlin, 1988), 14–180.

⁹⁵ A. Epstein, "Middle Byzantine Churches of Kastoria: Dates and Implications, with an Appendix on the Frescoes of the Mavriotissa Monastery," *Art Bulletin* 62 (1980): 190–207. And *ibid.*: "Frescoes of the Mavriotissa Monastery near Kastoria: Evidence of Millenarianism and Anti-Semitism in the Wake of the First Crusade," *Gesta* 21 (1982): 21–9.

⁹⁶ M. R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1994). For an excellent overview, see J. Cohen, "A 1096 Complex? Constructing the First Crusade in Jewish Historical Memory, Medieval and Modern," in *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, eds., M. Signer and J. Van Engen (Notre Dame, 2001), 9–26.

resurgence of the blood libel myth was followed by its illustration. Easter in Western Europe was the very time of massacres perpetrated by the Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land.⁹⁷ K. Kogman-Appel in a recent article⁹⁸ has shown the importance of texts on the cross around the twelfth century. The later Byzantine examples and precisely those works influenced by Byzantine iconography show a return to the more obvious and contemporary theme of the cross, away from the liturgical sources of the homilies. The background of historical events is interwoven in iconography and in this case comes to replace liturgy. These changes are reflected in Byzantine mural painting. But the meaning remains faithful to its origins.

VI. A THEOLOGICAL SUPERSESSION

Byzantine art has its own life, historical reasons, context, and meaning regarding the image of the Jew. In the feminine evicted figure, nothing marks her as specifically Jewish. The identification is ours, based on our knowledge of Western stereotypes. The Byzantine composition of the dual allegory contrasts with the Western European image of the Jew, so clearly defined by W. Cahn. Agreeing with Kessler's thesis of "supersession" of motifs, this one has lost or never had the "extravagant hyper-visibility" the Western Jew has for Cahn. The dual allegory is not a confrontation, but an aborted dialogue, a theological polemical statement: Old and New, black and white, paradise and earth (but never hell). The only connotation of interference is the angel, sign of the Divine purpose⁹⁹ of the casting out.¹⁰⁰

As in the Christian Topography, the notion of Old and New is the key to the figuration. The evicted figure is the allegory of old, her

⁹⁷ Abu Gosh in the third quarter of the twelfth century fits precisely into this historical framework. I see no reason to discuss the date.

⁹⁸ K. Kogman-Appel, "The Tree of Death and the Tree of Life: The Hanging of Haman in Medieval Jewish Manuscript Painting," in *Between the Image and the Word. Essays in Honor of John Plummer*, ed., Colum Hourihane (Penn State, 2005), 187–208. Concerning Byzantium, see D. Jacoby, *Les Juifs de Byzance: Une communauté marginalisée* (Athens, 1993), 144–6 and 153.

⁹⁹ Functioning like the hand in Jewish art. E. Revel-Neher, "Seeing the Voice: Configuring the Non-Figurative in Early Medieval Jewish Art," *Ars Judaica*, Vol. 2 (Bar-Ilan, 2006), 7–24.

¹⁰⁰ In the Western thirteenth century, Paul himself holding the cross takes the place of the angel and evicts Synagoga, proving again the link with Galatians and the contemporary influence of actual expulsions. See Cahn, *op. cit.* fig. 10-1.

presence negated by the gesture of the angel, and without the background of a relevant text or a titulus. Zacharias stands in the Topography as the symbol of Old, identified by his *tefillin* which do not appear in the text of Constantine of Antioch.

So totally different from the depiction of the allegory in Western art,¹⁰¹ the couple of feminine personifications translate into visual formulas a theological opposition without aggression or caricatural trend. The same is true for the masculine depiction of *tefillin*.

The differentiation between Jews and Christians in Byzantine art is qualitative and non-aggressive. Byzantium in its treatment of the Jew and its depiction is definitely opposed to the West and reflects probably the very origins of the image of the Jew.

Is the Byzantine image of the Jew that of the Jew in the Byzantine street? Is the depiction a revealing document of the past, by the imposed phenomenon of copy, itself the justification of religious art? Do theological, exegetic, or polemical discourses contribute to a better comprehension of images, or on the contrary, are images a precious and incomparable historical document?

VII. CONCLUSION

«En définitive, dans l'Empire byzantin, état chrétien, l'allégeance religieuse constitue le critère primordial de différenciation et de stratification sociales. Le Juif n'est pas marginalisé à la suite d'une atteinte au corps social, de la violation d'un code moral ou parce qu'il est affligé d'un mal physique ou mental. Il est marginalisé d'office, dès sa naissance. Par la suite, il reste cloisonné dans sa propre communauté qui constitue le cadre social exclusif dans lequel il évolue.»¹⁰²

David Jacoby. op. cit. 154

The image of the Jew in Byzantium is rooted in the ancient polemics of the confrontation of Old and New. But it remains deliberately without aggressive negative connotations. The visual use of a detail belonging

¹⁰¹ See note 63. E. Revel-Neher, *The Image of the Jew*, 88, note 154.

¹⁰² "In the final analysis, within the Byzantine Empire, a Christian state, religious allegiance constitutes the primordial criterion of differentiation and social stratification. The Jew is not marginalized following an attack against the social body or a violation of the moral code or because he suffers from a physical or mental ailment. He is marginalized automatically, right from birth. Thereafter, he stays cut off, inside his own community, which constitutes the social framework in which he evolves exclusively." (author's translation)

to the voluntary identification of the Jew or the dual feminine allegory emphasize the singularity of Byzantium in the depiction of Jews and Judaism. In trying to probe these images even further the task remains difficult, chaotic, and sometimes questionable in its relevance. But its importance can no longer be ignored.

The Jew in Byzantium and in Byzantine art is definitely not the Jew in the West. The Byzantine figurations wish to be a sign, an echo of a symbolic language, a pictogram wanting to be deciphered. In visual terms, they are a signature for an obsolete end and a new beginning.

FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF ANTI-JEWISH POLEMICS:
POLYMORPHY, POLYSÉMY

Vincent Déroche

Christian anti-Jewish polemics include a vast amount of heterogeneous texts over many centuries, belonging to different literary genres and related to various historical contexts. To comment on them is accordingly no simple task, and since A. von Harnack first attracted scholarly interest to those polemics through his study of the *Altercatio Simonis et Theophili*,¹ no such thing as a scholarly consensus has appeared. As a matter of fact, the anti-Jewish character of a precise text is rarely disputed, but it is not always clear whether every text with anti-Jewish features should be included in the category “anti-Jewish polemics”: should the latter be reserved only to texts explicitly apostrophizing the Jews, as dialogues do? For instance, are the famous *Contra Iudaeos* orations of John Chrysostom² anti-Jewish polemics, although they address Christians and not Jews? Anti-Jewish polemics are often tacitly equated with dialogues only, but as the most recent lists of such texts in Late Antiquity and Middle Ages³ show, it seems more appropriate to include all works whose main purpose is to seek a confrontation with Judaism, even in homiletics, theological treatises, and so on.⁴ There is no exhaustive catalogue of such productions, and it is not the scope of the present paper to provide one. It is moreover very difficult to ascertain how many texts, in percentage, survived from the original production: polemical texts often do not fare well out of the exact context they are aimed at, and B. Blumenkranz

¹ *Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani* (Leipzig, 1883).

² PG 48, 843–942; cf. R. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jew: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Berkeley, 1983).

³ I. Aulisa, *Dialogo di Papisco e Filone Giudei con un monaco*, in I. Aulisa and C. Schiano, *Quaderni di Vetera Christianorum* 30 (Bari, 2005): 17–86; see also A. Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, *Byzantinisches Archiv* 18 (Leipzig, 1999), but keeping in mind the reservations in *BZ* 98 (2005): 133–5.

⁴ I rejoin here the conclusion of Av. Cameron, “Apologetics in the Roman Empire: A Genre of Intolerance?” in *Humana sapit*, eds. J.-M. Carrié and R. Testa (Turnhout, 2002), 219–27: to define a genre and even a specific audience is difficult, because “apologétiques is a strategy, not a genre.”

has shown for the (better documented) western Middle Ages that many such texts, too closely related to a specific historical context, were preserved only in very few manuscripts while the patristic texts, more authoritative and more general in their scope, were reproduced in a vast amount of manuscripts.⁵ In Byzantium, many texts of the sixth and seventh centuries have survived (and even then only as fragments) only because of the zeal of iconophile writers who used them and reproduced them against the iconoclasts, especially at the council of Nicaea II;⁶ other periods were perhaps less fortunate. We shall deal in this paper mainly with the texts produced by Oriental Christians from the fourth to the tenth centuries, but it should be noted in pre-amble how impressive the sheer continuity of this production is: few Christian periods do not practice some form of apostroph of Judaism, many texts copy without qualms an important part of older argumentations, as if time had not passed since then.⁷ For instance, the title itself of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo* alludes to the title of a much older anti-Jewish text, now lost, as if to exhibit continuity in a very different context.⁸ The Jewish problem (*la question juive*, as Sartre said) is a constant phenomenon of Christianity, but this permanence is, so to say, virtual: it is a possibility which may or may not be much exploited. The amount and quality of anti-Jewish literature has been subject to drastic changes throughout the ages, and its interest has gone to different articulations of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. To sketch a short phenomenology of this literature may contribute to a clarification.

The first and most evident approach is to study the relation of these texts with the historical reality of their time. It is no simple task: when P. Maas reported the first edition of the *Doctrina Jacobi*, he patently believed that it was a nearly stenographic transcription of a real debate,

⁵ "Vie et survie de la polémique antijuive," *Studia Patristica* I, 1 (1957): 460–76.

⁶ See the provisional list in my former paper, "La polémique anti-judaïque au VI^e et au VII^e siècle: un memento inédit, les *Képhalaia*," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 275–311.

⁷ See in the last instance Aulisa, *Dialogo*. That does not imply, of course, as Arthur C. McGiffert believed, that one could find entire parts of works of the first Christian centuries in the later texts; L. Lahey's essay, *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, Fitzwilliam College thesis (Cambridge 2000), is still too optimistic on that point.

⁸ See in last instance G. Otranto, "La *Disputa fra Giasone e Papisco* falsamente attribuita ad Aristone di Pella," *Vetera Christianorum* 33 (1996): 337–51, and S. Borzi, "Sull'attribuzione della *Disputa fra Giasone e Papisco* ad Aristone di Pella," *Vetera Christianorum* 41 (2004): 347–54.

which nobody would assume nowadays;⁹ on the contrary, B. Blumenkranz once proposed (with better reasons) to consider as a later fake the Latin Letter of Severus of Minorca, which was thereafter recognized as a highly biased witness of contemporary events.¹⁰ Harnack deserves credit for having been the first to show that it is impossible to accept at face value many “dialogues”: they pose as stenographic accounts of real debates, but assign to the Jew the impossible position of a mere punching bag for the Christian, declare the latter victorious and quite often add the conversion and baptism of the Jew(s). Such texts were probably not intended to be read or heard by Jews, which leads to the question: of what use were written works which did not aim at their pretended foe? In Harnack’s judgment, the clearly artificial character of the *Altercatio* and other similar texts left only one explanation possible: anti-Jewish polemics was a mere pretext for a real purpose, catechizing new Christian converts, usually ex-pagans. That left unanswered another question: why then choose a fictitious controversy with Judaism rather than another pedagogical device, if the purpose is only to introduce the main tenets of Christianity? Since real debates between Christians and Jews are well documented (but mostly just by fleeting mentions in other texts), one understands why J. Juster,¹¹ A. L. Williams,¹² and M. Simon¹³ prefer to consider that literature as a more or less distorted echo of a real confrontation with contemporary Judaism. Indeed, various forms of public confrontation between different religious groups or within one of them were not bizarre exceptions, but rather the rule of Late Antiquity: a conciliar canon of 451 and an *ad hoc* imperial law of 452 forbade clerics to discuss mysteries of the Christian faith in public, so as not to expose

⁹ BZ 20 (1911): 573–5.

¹⁰ B. Blumenkranz, *Revue des études juives* 111 (1951–1952): 24–7; one has only to consult S. Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (Oxford, 1996) (and to correct on this point Déroche, “Memento inédit”, 295–6). This mistake is instructive: the document seemed too nice to be honest, with miracles drawn from biblical parallels to dignify the conversion of the Jews; but those “miracles” were not the product of a shrewd falsificator, but of the converts themselves who spontaneously interpreted the dramatic events they lived through so as to justify their conversion with the criteria of legitimacy they knew.

¹¹ J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l’Empire romain : leur condition politique, économique et sociale* (Paris, 1914).

¹² A. L. Williams, *Adversus Iudaeos: A Bird’s Eye View of Christian Apologies until the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1935).

¹³ M. Simon, *Verus Israel. Étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l’empire romain (135–425)* (Paris 1948, repr. 1964).

them to ridicule in front of pagans and Jews,¹⁴ precisely to shield the new state religion from the usual concurrence of the “supermarket of religions” (G. Stroumsa) that was until then the Roman Empire, where public controversy was a well-known fact¹⁵—a fact that allowed the literary construction we find in anti-Jewish polemics. Some anti-Jewish texts introduce themselves explicitly as textbooks to rehearse for future real controversies, and some others were written with that aim in mind, without claiming it loudly, and probably beside other aims.¹⁶ Homiletics provide an enlightening comparison, since some authors (John Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem) explain in no uncertain terms that they want to provide the “ordinary Christian” with a stock of ready-made answers to Jewish objections. A main feature of many of these texts was accordingly to prepare for a real conflict, but to do so by aiming first at internal use (wavering or perplexed Christians) and by exhibiting not a realistic picture of this conflict, but an idealized and comforting one, with the Christian side always winning; the theatrical (sometimes histrionic) flavor of many anti-Jewish polemics has to do with that unrealistic *mise en scène* of real problems. In a previous paper,¹⁷ I suggested that this feature was prominent in the Oriental texts of the sixth and seventh centuries: some peculiar controversies, especially about the cross, icons, and relics, find a responding echo in our information from other sources on the period. The worries and aims of the Christian writers were real, although complex and confusing, and were really related to Judaism, which did not prevent a deep ignorance about the latter.

That ignorance about the Judaism of that period is still partly our lot. Harnack was able to “derealize” so fully these texts only because he believed (for theological and religious reasons) that Judaism had very early stopped being a real opponent for Christianity: fighting an already defeated opponent seemed absurd. Nowadays, the *opinio communis* posits on the contrary that Judaism continued to be a serious concurrence for Christianity for a long time. Not only during the very

¹⁴ *Codex Justinianus* 1. 1, 4. It is the mere translation in imperial law of the interdiction edicted by the council of Chalcedon in 451: ACO II, 1, 3, ed. Schwarz, 120–1.

¹⁵ R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1995).

¹⁶ The *Kephalaia epaporètika*, ed. V. Déroche, *TM* 11 (1991): 297–307, is the clearest case, but works like the *Disputatio Anastasii* have similar parts, and it is a good way to understand texts which incorporate answers to already known objections.

¹⁷ “Memento inédit.”

beginnings, when Christianity struggled to distinguish itself from Judaism while claiming to be its legitimate heir, but also after the political victory of Christianity with Constantine, the religion of the First Covenant preserved a power of fascination for the faithful of the Second Covenant.¹⁸ The difficulty for the historian is the scarcity of voices on the Jewish side: the Jews of these periods left many texts, but those, especially the talmudic documents, focus on the inner life of the Jewish communities; the outer world and the stance of the Jews toward it are nearly absent. The documents which mention the outer world and possible foes are difficult to understand (apocalyptic texts, liturgical poetry) and often difficult to place in space and time. To hypothesize, for example, that some changes in liturgical poetry express a resistance to Byzantine oppression from the sixth century onwards, as J. Mann did,¹⁹ is properly speculative. There are some polemical texts on the Jewish side, like the so-called polemic of Nestor the priest,²⁰ but this corpus is rather late and above all without comparison to the mass of documents on the Christian side. To preserve and to communicate such texts does not seem to have been a priority for Jewish communities. That does not imply that there was no Jewish reply to Christian polemics, at a more informal level, and Christian polemics give a glimpse of it. Another difficulty is to appreciate the potential of Judaism as an attractive religion for newcomers, as a real proselytizing force, since the Jewish documents give no clear answers on this point. A recent study concluded that even the idea of a Jewish proselytism was a sheer product of modern scholarly fantasy.²¹ Such a conclusion,

¹⁸ The author most emblematic of this awkward situation is Aphraate the Persian; see M.-J. Pierre, *Les Exposés d'Aphraate le Sage*, SC 349 and 359 (Paris, 1988 and 1989). For the first centuries, W. Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh, 1998), asserts too that there was a real controversy with Judaism.

¹⁹ J. Mann, "Changes in the Divine Service of the Synagogue due to Religious Persecution," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 4 (1927): 241–310.

²⁰ See D. Lasker and S. Stroumsa, *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest* (Jerusalem, 1996), who place these texts after 800. We shall add an enigmatic manuscript, dating perhaps to the sixth century: M. Van Esbroeck, "Le manuscrit hébreu 755 et l'histoire des martyrs de Nedjran," in *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam*, eds., P. Canivet and J.-P. Rey-Coquais (Damas, 1992), 25–30.

²¹ E. Will and C. Orrieux, "*Prosélytisme juif*?" *Histoire d'une erreur* (Paris, 1992). In spite of interesting ideas, the book is flawed by the fact that Judaism is implicitly compared to a Christianity capable of a coherent and rationally organized proselytism—that is, after the council of Trento in the sixteenth century. During antiquity, and even later in the Middle Ages, the expansion of Christianity was rather anarchic, usually without previous planning from the hierarchy (see G. Dagron, in *Histoire du Christianisme* 4, eds., J.-M. Mayeur et al. (Paris, 1993), 216–221), exactly the situation described in

however, relies on a confusion (the lack of a conscious and organized enterprise of proselytism is not a lack of real religious attraction), and a rapid comparison with the proofs of an expansion of Judaism (epigraphical records in diaspora synagogues, conversion of the Himyarite kingdom in Arabia in the sixth century or later of the Khazars, individual Christian converts) is sufficient to prove that the attraction to Judaism was well above zero—but how much? To examine anti-Jewish polemics through a comparison with the real relations between Jews and Christians leads to a disturbing conclusion: the quality of the relations between Jews and Christians “on the ground” remains elusive, and cannot be used as a clear criterion to evaluate the closeness of the texts with reality. In two erudite papers, G. Stemberger compared the “hard data” we possess about the situation of the Jews in Palestine in Late Antiquity, especially in archaeological records, with the affirmations of polemical literature and of imperial legislation.²² The conclusion is an obvious distortion between the hostility proclaimed by Christian preachers and even by the imperial government, and an everyday life in which Jewish communities do not seem to be in trouble and are able to keep their synagogues and even to build new ones, in spite of a theoretical interdiction; business as usual till the end of Roman Empire, so to say. That is of course basically true, but such an optimistic picture does not contribute an explanation of the crisis at the beginning of the seventh century. Although the size of the crisis may and must be debated, it did exist, but did not leave clear signs on the ground—and the mental processes which led to it left even less. No excavation found the churches that the Jews were supposed to have burnt at Ptolemais (Akko) during the Sassanid invasion, if we accept the testimony of the *Doctrina Jacobi*,²³ nor synagogues burnt in reprisals, but that does not mean that there was no conflict. Archaeology is of obvious value because it provides indubitable material clues, but these clues are irremediably local, and no excavation can follow

the *Jewish Antiquities* of Flavius Joseph; a capital passus, Mat. 23, 15, about the rabbi's readiness to use every mean to keep a proselyte, is explained away rather than commented.

²² G. Stemberger, “Jewish-Christian Contacts in Galilee (5th to 7th Centuries)”, in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land*, eds., A. Kofsky and G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem, 1998), 131–45; “Christians and Jews in Byzantine Palestine,” in *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origins to the Latin Kingdoms*, eds., O. Limor and G. Stroumsa (Turnhout, 2006), 293–319.

²³ *Doctrina Iacobi nuper baptizati* IV, 5, ed., V. Déroche, TM 11 (1991): 181.

some general mental processes. Until *Kristallnacht* in 1938, antisemitism in modern Germany did not leave any imprint on buildings that a future archaeologist could register, but that does not imply that antisemitism did not exist; the difficulty in this field of study is precisely that we need to evoke an atmosphere, some hidden evolutions, using elusive clues.²⁴

Such a study should not remain prisoner to the original Harnack dilemma: to study polemic texts is not only to appreciate to which degree they are 'real' or 'realistic.' This is impossible to quantify, and the object proper vanishes if one tries to study it in only one dimension. Other dimensions and features appear when one considers what is really at stake in such texts. Critical issues and aims may be multiple, and texts often conceal and exhibit them at the same time. The quest for the essential issue leads to the quest for the real audience, not always identical with the explicitly stated audience. Through the character of the Jew, which opponent is aimed at? In front of which audience is he to be discredited? It has long been noted that if texts like the homilies *Contra Judaeos* of John Chrysostom are intended for a Christian audience, and more pointedly to the Christians leaning toward an association in some form with Jewish cultural practices, many anti-Jewish "dialogues" probably have the same audience, aiming at the wavering Christian or even at the whole Christian community. Homilies of bishops and priests and other texts surely designed for use inside the Christian community have a definitive advantage for the historian: they explicitly state the issues which remain implicit in polemical texts, which were mostly to set clear boundaries between Judaism and Christianity, in theology and in practice, and accordingly produce a Christian auto-definition by contrast to Judaism; community limits and community definition were interdependent. From this point of view, self-definition and definition of the other are to be studied

²⁴ Even what seems the surest archaeological proof remains ambiguous; the recent discovery of a Christian mass burial at Jerusalem at the beginning of the seventh century (R. Reich, "The Ancient Burial Ground in Mamilla Neighborhood, Jerusalem", in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, ed., H. Geva (Jerusalem, 1994), 117–8), certifies the existence of the mass killings related by Christian narratives of the fall of the city to the Persians in 614, but will never tell us whether the Persians were the sole ones responsible or the Jews together with them, as Strategios maintains—cf. B. Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VII^e siècle. II. Commentaire* (Paris, 1992), 159–64.

as diachronic and as dynamic, as G. Stroumsa has shown.²⁵ A recent paper by A. S. Jacobs has proposed an interesting idea close to that perspective: through their fictitious dialogue with Judaism, anti-Jewish texts integrate and internalize (in a psychological sense) the difference of the other to the definition of Christian identity, and inherent to that process is part of at least a provisional indefinition, a “dialogical irresolution” which is the precondition of the text itself.²⁶ This view of the problem is particularly well suited to the first centuries, when disassociating themselves from the Jews in front of the pagans was a vexing enterprise for the Christians, but it remained pertinent for a long time—in Byzantium at least till the end of iconoclasm. It has besides the advantage of reminding us of an essential point in the confrontation between Jews and Christians: its asymmetry. Christian identity is necessarily questioned by the sheer existence of Judaism, while the reverse is not true; it is therefore natural that Christian texts are prone to somehow surevalue Judaism and its dangers when they decide to address that question. That feature has often driven modern scholars to conclude that the Jews in these texts were mythical rather than historical figures, dummy puppets produced by the new Christian ideology according to its own needs, as proposed by M. Taylor,²⁷ or simple straw men for other more real foes, for instance the Arabs in the texts according to D. Olster,²⁸ or in the pictures according to K. Corrigan.²⁹ Each of these interpretations is excessive, because they arbitrarily raise to the status of focus of these texts what is at best a secondary meaning. It seems more interesting to suppose that the overnight accession of Christianity to the status of state religion paradoxically strengthened the need to affirm Christian triumph over Judaism, and that Jewish “opposition” was magnified in the minds of Christians who were

²⁵ G. Stroumsa, “From Anti-Judaism to Antisemitism in Early Christianity?” in *Contra Judaeos*, eds., G. Stroumsa and O. Limor (Tübingen, 1996), 1–26.

²⁶ A. S. Jacobs, “Dialogical Differences: (De-)Judaizing Jesus’ Circumcision,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15 (2007): 291–335; note p. 318 a felicitous formulation of the Christian need “to elaborate the image of the Jew as their troubling interlocutor.”

²⁷ M. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus* (Leyde, 1995).

²⁸ D. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia, 1994); see my review, “Polémique antijudaïque et émergence de l’Islam,” *Revue des Etudes byzantines* 57 (1999): 141–61. To explain the focalization of seventh-century Christian authors on the Jews, it is more fitting to refer to the more balanced position of Av. Cameron, “Byzantine and Jews,” *BMGS* 26 (1996): 249–74.

²⁹ K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992).

forced to integrate this disturbing phenomenon to the new ideology of a universal, predestinated, and Christian empire. Christian texts constructed an image of the Jew which per force suited their own needs,³⁰ but this trend, now well known, does not imply that this image had nothing to do with the Jews of the time, who were at the same time recognized in their existence and ill known in their real identity—as is often the case in polemics.

In many cases, commentators proposed one more explanation (still following Harnack!) for explicitly anti-Judaic texts: they were in fact catecheses, using the difference between Judaism and Christianity as a simple pedagogic device. Proceeding that way is really convenient: to discuss the difference between Christianity and Judaism is an easy way to explain both the history and the nature of the former. In the first centuries, it is no accident that the famous *Dialogue with Trypho* of Justin aims not only at the debate with Judaism, but also at making Christianity understandable to third parties (evidently pagans); the *Logos alethes* of Celsus reverses the idea, accusing the Christians of being nothing more than bad Jews, and Origen in his *Contra Celsum* continues this tripartite controversy; Eusebius of Caesarea conceived the “anti-pagan” *Praeparatio evangelica* and the “anti-Jewish” *Demonstratio evangelica* as a pair of texts. In Harnack’s view, the *Altercatio Simonis et Theophili*, both fictitious and peaceful, was a form of instruction for recent converts from paganism. That pedagogic or pastoral function is also found in other texts, mostly homiletic, where the orator vehemently reproaches Jews who are out of time, and goes back to the unique moment of the Passion. Such apostrophes seem gratuitous to the modern reader, i.e. they pop out of the liturgical calendar by themselves, without connection to real Jews of the author’s time. In the West, that was one of the ways which led to the formation of a true antisemitism feeding upon mythical images of the Jews. In the Christian Orient, this kind of fictitious apostrophe to a silent opponent, inherited from classical rhetoric, developed itself especially for apostrophe to the Jews.³¹ Such a feigned dialogue is in fact a dialogue of the author to himself, or to other members of the

³⁰ See A. Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, 2004); on the same line Stroumsa, “From Anti-Judaism.”

³¹ For J. Kecskeméti, *Une rhétorique au service de l’antijudaïsme (IV^e siècle–VII^e siècle)* (Paris, 2005), the pseudo-chrysostomian literature developed this practice about the Jews.

same community. In that view, the dialogues are not characterized by real polemical intent, or even by the anxiety of self-definition; that fits well with passages of these texts where the Jew sounds like a more or less gifted student hearing a lecture from his Christian teacher, and asking meekly the “good questions” of a pupil and not those of a polemical opponent. Another parallel appears, the literary genre of the “questions and answers” (*erotapokriseis*) which in Late Antiquity fluctuated between a manual of polemics and a manual for teaching or for propaganda;³² a few polemical texts in some manuscripts are given a title with the label *erotapokriseis*, which makes them a teaching device. On the other hand, it has long been noted that some parts of anti-Jewish dialogues were in the end “reused” in such collections of questions and answers, where they are plainly supposed to help Christian “pupils.”³³ In a precise context, it may be the main object of the text: P. Andrist has shown it should be the case for the *Dialogue of Athanasios and Zacchaios*, in his view mainly an apollinarist catechism in form of an anti-Jewish dialogue.³⁴ It could be that the anonymous *Disputatio* edited and dated to the sixth century by J. Declerck³⁵ aimed rather at ex-pagans. I remain nonetheless somewhat skeptical about this conclusion: if it is just a rhetorical device, why Judaism and not paganism or anything else? Many anti-Jewish texts seem colorless and irrelevant to the modern observer precisely because they were produced as potential tools in reserve for a future controversy, and the possible absence of characteristic clues on the redaction context are in fact only a rather weak argument *ex silentio*: a quiet matter-of-fact tone may serve a real polemical intent, and moreover the same text

³² See Av. Cameron, “Disputations, Polemical Literature and the Formation of Opinion in the Early Byzantine Period,” *Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta* 42 (1991): 91–108.

³³ Jacobs, “Dialogical Differences,” recently gave an interesting development on this point by supposing that the debate was continuously more internalized by the Christians, and that the *erotapokriseis* were the final phase of that internalization. Some qualifications are nonetheless necessary: first, collections like the *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* have the explicit (but not exclusive) project of providing refutations to counter Jewish critics, and this preoccupation, quite close to that of John Chrysostom, is never totally absent; second, this debate with “the inner Jew” hidden in the innermost conscience of the Christian is also a feature always already there from the start.

³⁴ P. Andrist, *Le Dialogue d’Athanasie et Zachée: étude des sources et du contexte littéraire*, thèse de doctorat de l’Université de Genève (2001), 403–86.

³⁵ J. Declerck, *Anonymus Dialogus cum Iudaeis saeculi ut videtur sexti*, CCSG 30 (Turnhout, 1994).

may be intended to serve many functions or to reach many audiences at the same time.

This last feature is, in my opinion, the most frequent and salient of that text category, when seen as a whole: it is either a polemic which seems close to real controversy and geared to at least two different audiences (Jewish opponents, wavering Christians), or the text has multiple aims (catechize as well as debate, persuade and define himself as well as refute). This potential polysemy is confirmed by the ease with which text segments pass from one genre to another (dialogues, homiletic, hagiography, questions and answers). All polemics are aimed not at one audience, but at a spectrum of audiences between two debating hard poles, and always imply a redefinition of himself the better to exclude the other, the opponent. But it is even more so in the case of anti-Jewish polemics because of the plurality of the levels of conflict: mere attraction to Jewish customs is dangerous for the theological core of Christianity; Judaism is a contestation of the Christian claim to universality; the difficulty of combining religious separation with historical continuity; the peculiar mix of the Christian attitude to Judaism (tolerated while emphasizing that Christianity has superseded it and made it useless) easily exacerbates the need for conflict. Justin had already fought Jews, pagans, and heretics, and many later texts cannot be properly understood without that polyphony or polysemy. For instance, a very peculiar text, the *De rebus gestis in Perside*, probably written in the sixth or at the beginning of the seventh century, purportedly gives an account of a religious controversy between pagans, Jews, and Christians at the Sassanid court, and it associates in a unique way long text segments which are properly anti-Jewish, connected in some way to the *nébuleuse anastasiennne* (P. Andrist) and heterogeneous documents (oracular responses, historical narratives, anecdotes) which are supposed to prove that paganism too had received in different forms the good news of the coming of Christ, parallel to Judaism.³⁶ The anti-Jewish aspect is present beyond a doubt, with real hostility in some places (description of the rabbis, etc.) and ending with a baptism of many Jews; but it is so to say instrumentalized, put to the service of an apology of Christianity aiming at a pagan or ex-pagan audience in

³⁶ E. Bratke, ed., *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sassaniden*, TU 19 (Leipzig, 1899), 1–305; Pauline Bringel is now preparing a new critical edition, on the basis of her recent thesis in the Sorbonne.

the first place, with perhaps implicitly the hope to convert pagan Persia in the end. Even more astonishing, the text vehemently reproves theological dissents between Christians and gives a very negative picture of Christian archimandrites. To reduce this text to only one of these features would be paramount to mutilating it: it expresses, not without disorder, a peculiar *Weltanschauung*, plus a sheer pleasure of the narrative. Every text shows a different dynamic, which has to do with the author or redactor, but also with a specific historical context, and anti-Jewish texts often seem to stand at the crossroads between different visions and different identities: they reveal much more than attitudes to Judaism.

If context is the main factor, is it possible to sketch a chronological evolution, following the historical context? In spite of the difficulty of putting these texts into neat categories and clear datations, a first criterion presents itself, the quantitative variation of the preserved literary production. Between Constantine and roughly the mid-fifth century, a fair number of texts exist, followed by a net decrease; this decrease has not found for the moment a better explanation than the intensification of internecine Christian controversy about christology, while the former period was more marked by the definition of a new triumphalist attitude of Christians versus pagans and Jews. Then, even if many texts cannot find a very precise datation, anti-Jewish productions gain strength in the sixth and seventh centuries, with some echos in the eighth: conflicts between Jews and Christians are exacerbated by new aspects of Christian practices, then by the war with Persia and the ill-fated forced baptism by Heraclius, and in the end by the rise of Islam, and these events find a nearly direct translation into polemical literature. The coming of Islam shapes indeed a new tripartite conflict where Muslims are substituted for the disappearing pagans: the debate between the three "Abrahamic" religions is a totality, where in Christian minds, the political and military threat from the Arabs cannot be dissociated from the theological threat from Judaism.³⁷

The following decrease of preserved texts is probably not to be explained by the general destruction of texts during the iconoclasm: during the next centuries, anti-Jewish Byzantine texts become not only fewer, but less aggressive, and get a more didactic character which makes them closer to homiletics or *erotapokriseis*. For instance, the anonymous *Dialexis* against the Jews at the beginning of the tenth

³⁷ See on this subject Déroche, "Polémique et émergence de l'islam."

century seems a-historical in its attitude to the Jews: the author's stance about the tetragamy is more easily discernable than his motivations to write against the Jews.³⁸ The complex cycle about Saint Gregentios, recently published, has more to do with the hagiographic or encyclopedic genres than with anti-Jewish polemics, in spite of the presence of a long *Dialexis* with the Jew Herban.³⁹ Both texts do not seem really connected to Basil I's attempt to convert Jews by a mix of constraint and largesse. On the Christian side, the only text about this affair is the treaty of Gregory Asbestas, stridently opposed to the imperial initiative more than to the Jews.⁴⁰ In fact, while anti-Jewish polemics once annexed various literary forms, it is now annexed as a clearly recognizable literary form, but employed for other aims. The most striking case is provided by the *Objections to the Hebrews*.⁴¹ This iconophile text was written during the first iconoclasm in the form of anti-Jewish polemics in order to equate iconoclasts with Jews, because the polemic at stake and the true opponent were evident. But the mentions of Jews in other texts of the tenth century such as the *Life of Andrew Salos* or the *Life of Basil the Younger*⁴² seem to be also ritual formulations lacking polemical overtones. They just remind the reader that the divine election of the new chosen people, orthodox Byzantium, has a corollary with the exclusion of diverse reprovén groups, among whom the Jews are the foremost as most ancient, a kind of antonomasis of the reviled one. The sharpness of the condemnation is bound to a rather peaceful distancing, very different from the real anxieties of the seventh century.⁴³

³⁸ M. Hostens, *Anonymi auctoris Theognosiae (saec. IX/X) Dissertatio contra Iudaeos*, CCSG 14 (Turnhout, 1986).

³⁹ A. Berger, *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Tajar* (Berlin, 2006).

⁴⁰ G. Dagrón, "Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée sur le baptême des Juifs," *TM* 11 (1991): 313–57.

⁴¹ P. Eleuteri and A. Rigo, eds., *Eretici, Dissidenti, Musulmani ed Ebrei a Bisanzio—Una raccolta eresiologica del XII secolo* (Venise, 1993), 109–123; the text was not correctly interpreted until P. Andrist, "Les *Objections des Hébreux*: un document du premier iconoclasm?" *REB* 57 (1999): 99–140.

⁴² The *Life of Constantine the Jew—Acta Sanctorum Nov. IV* (1925), 628–56, the only important text having as a theme a Jew converted to Christianity, gives an indirect confirmation: Constantine's Jewishness does not interest his hagiographer, and his inner knowledge of Judaism is neither extolled nor used, while in the West the converted ex-Jews were used as shock troops in the controversy with their former community.

⁴³ Perhaps this phenomenon has something to do with the way in which this period is nearly obsessed by biblical models and the legitimacy they can confer (especially the iconoclastic period), but not by the normal contenders for this legacy, that is the Jews.

In the Meso-Byzantine period, however, the polemic with Islam assumes a new shape, more confident, more rigid, and now independent of the attitude toward Judaism.⁴⁴ It is accordingly striking to see that from the fourteenth century onwards Byzantium produces a new wave of anti-Jewish texts,⁴⁵ once again bound to anti-Islamic polemics.⁴⁶ The political and religious Turkish threat revives the need of auto-definition also versus the Jews, in a context of greater fluidity where there were many conversions to Islam, but also some syncretisms, and even the hope of converting Turks to Christianity. The controversy of Gregory Palamas with a mysterious group of “Chionai” (probably ex-Christians now judaizing Muslims) during his captivity by the Turks⁴⁷ is an emblematic episode of this new situation, which deserves a more systematical comparison with the crisis in the seventh century.

It would be fruitless to conclude such a brief survey with an attempt at synthesis: the most characteristic feature of anti-Jewish polemics is precisely to be proteiform, its capacity to signal real change through apparent repetition. Since it has no single function, it is an interesting indicator of the stance of the Christians toward other groups and toward themselves and their own identity. Plato once famously defined Eros as a *metaxu* being, a go-between able to establish communication not only between individuals, but also between different realms of reality: anti-Jewish polemics stands quite close to this function for the historian, and one can only hope that many scholars will approach this plural and fruitful object.

This is of course an old feature in Byzantium, but the Meso-Byzantine period is probably the apex, with a strong connection between imperial power and old Israel—(see G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre* (Paris, 1996))—and an omnipresence of eschatological scenarios where Byzantium assumes squarely the role of Israel, couched in biblical language—see M. H. Congourdeau, “Le judaïsme, cœur de l’identité byzantine,” in *Les Chrétiens et les Juifs dans les sociétés de rite grec et latin*, eds., M. Dmitriev, D. Tollet and E. Teiro (Paris, 2003), 17–27.

⁴⁴ See A.-T. Khoury, *Apologétique byzantine contre l’Islam (8^e–13^e siècle)* (Altenberg, 1982); the classical form is the work of Nicetas of Byzantium, ed. Karl Förstel, *Schriften zum Islam* (Würzburg Altenberg, 2000).

⁴⁵ Cf. S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium: 1204–1453* (Tuscaloosa, 1985).

⁴⁶ See the texts of John Cantacuzene, PG 154, 371–692 against the Muslim (the anti-Jewish text is still unpublished) and of Manuel Paleologue, ed. E. Trapp, *Dialoge mit einem “Perser”* (Vienna, 1966).

⁴⁷ V. Philippidis-Braat, “La captivité de Palamas chez les Turcs: dossier et commentaire,” *TM* 7 (1979): 109–222, esp. 214–8 about the Chionai.

THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF GREEK *CONTRA IUDAEOS*
MANUSCRIPT BOOKS IN THE BYZANTINE ERA:
A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Patrick Andrist

Thanks to a generous grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation, the author was able to study the making of *contra Iudaeos* manuscript books in ancient Greek language in Byzantine and post-Byzantine times.¹ The goal was to evaluate the nature and the spread of the books produced with a major interest in polemics against the Jews, and the intent was to analyze all manuscripts that can reasonably be considered as belonging to this category. It is both a small chapter of the books' history in general, as well as one more source of information for the history of the Jews in the Greek medieval and Renaissance periods. The project extended to all Greek manuscripts entirely or partially produced before the seventeenth century, without any geographical limitation. Based on catalogues, editions, and secondary literature, about 900 manuscripts have been registered as containing at least one text *contra Iudaeos*, of which about 500 were directly controlled by myself or on microform: about 120 of them have been registered as manuscript books or as containing parts of manuscript books, alongside 40 other manuscripts also of analytical interest. Based on catalogue descriptions or secondary literature, the remaining 400 manuscripts seem less important. They have not yet been examined, but, according to recent experience, one does not expect to find more than 30 to 50 new *contra Iudaeos* books amongst them.

¹ The author warmly thanks the Swiss National Science Foundation, which generously supported this research; Guy Stroumsa, Robert Bonfil, and the other organizers of the conference "Christians and Jews in Byzantium: Images and Cultural Dynamics" and the Scholion Interdisciplinary Center in Jewish Studies for the opportunity to present the first results of these studies; the many librarians who delivered all the needed authorizations to work with the manuscripts; and the Société académique de Genève for its most needed extra support. Special thanks are also due to Marilena Maniaci and Paul Canart for their friendly advices, criticisms, and encouragements, and to Anita Brumann Cullen and Hannah Landes for the many corrections about language and expressions. I am, of course, the only one to blame for the too many remaining shortcomings of this article.

However, as several catalogues and libraries still need to be explored, the overall amount of potential manuscripts could rise and, hopefully, important pieces could still show up.²

The current paper is a preliminary result of this inquiry, with a limited scope. It is restricted to the Greek codices produced before the fall of Constantinople but without any geographical limitation. It only aims at illustrating the kind of manuscript books one finds from that time, their possible typological evolutions throughout the considered centuries, and the problems one faces in doing such a study.

As time and space only allow for part of the data to be presented and as many manuscripts and libraries remain to be searched, no statistical analysis of the described phenomena are presented here and this paper should not be considered a conclusive report on the Byzantine *contra Iudaeos* books. Nevertheless, it points to conclusions that should arouse the interest of historians of books and historians of religions and hopefully also motivate students to explore this promising *terra incognita* even deeper.

METHODOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS³

Even though the project and the resulting publications draw attention to forgotten important manuscripts and the history of the texts they contain, it must be stated that the main purpose is not the history of

² The project was “technically” finished in the summer of 2008, because the author had to dedicate himself to other duties. However, a systematic study with a working title *Les livres manuscrits grecs thématiques. L'exemple des codex adversus iudaeos conservés à la Bibliothèque vaticane* was delayed because the Vatican library was closed for three years. It should finally be printed as an independent book in the series *Studi e testi* in 2012. It has a wider manuscript basis and discusses the methodology in depth. In addition, it describes 55 *contra Iudaeos* manuscript books preserved at the *Bibliotheca Vaticana* in 33 volumes and presents 23 other codices more lightly dedicated to this subject. It mostly confirms the conclusions of this article while adding more information and nuances for which the space here is too short.

³ Frequent abbreviations include:

- Berger = A. Berger, *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, Millennium-Studien zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.—Millennium Studies in the Culture and History of the First Millennium C.E. 7 (Berlin, 2006).
- BHG xxx = Number xxx in F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, Subsidia Hagiographica 8a (Bruxelles, 1957³). Idem, *Novum Auctarium BHG*, Subsidia Hagiographica 65 (Bruxelles, 1984).—This number is given only when there is no equivalent CPG number.

these texts. What is under scrutiny here is the way they were “published” in manuscript books⁴ that were originally produced or later assembled with a major interest in polemics against the Jews.

This paper is based on the following six major methodological principles:

- 1) The prime evidence are manuscripts that were studied directly or on microform. When other manuscripts are occasionally mentioned, they are always clearly “branded” as known from secondary literature.
- 2) The reference units cannot be the volumes as they appear today, but should be the books, as they used to be at the time, even though their precise and complete original extension and content is often no longer clear today. Consequently, in each manuscript one must strive to identify the parts that used to circulate independently. This means that one must pay the utmost attention to spots where important changes (texts, handwriting, material, lay-

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- Cat. = Catalogue.
 - CPG xxx = Number xxx in M. Geerard and J. Noret, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, 6 t., Corpus Christianorum (Turnhout, 1974–2003).
 - Voicu, CCG 6 = S. Voicu, *Codicum civitatis Vaticanae*, Corpus Chysostomici Graeci 6 (Paris, 1999).
 - Ehrhard = A. Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche, Erste Teil—Die Überlieferung*, 3 t., 4 vols., TU 50, 51, 52 (1939–1952).
 - JÖB, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*.
 - RGK x = Tome x in E. Gamillscheg, D. Harlfinger et al., *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten 800–1600*, 3 t., 9 vols. so far (Wien, 1981–).
 - RO xxx = Number xxx in J.-M. Olivier, *Répertoire des bibliothèques et des catalogues de manuscrits grecs de Marcel Richard*, Corpus Christianorum (Turnhout, 1995).
 - Robertson = R. G. Robertson, *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: A Critical Text, Introduction to the Manuscript Evidence, and an Inquiry into the Sources and Literary Relationship* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1986).
 - TU = Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur.

Whenever possible, mentioned texts are identified by their “CPG” number. Only part of the secondary literature is quoted, sometimes in abridged form. In particular, catalogues are not fully referenced but identified by their “RO” number.

⁴ On Byzantine books, see G. Cavallo, “Il libro come oggetto d’uso nel mondo bizantino”, *JÖB* 31 (1981) = *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinisten Kongress. Akten*, I/2: 395–423 (discussion in vol. 32 (1982), 265–72); H. Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz. Die Byzantinische Buchkultur* (München, 1989), 17–75; J. Irigoin, *Le livre grec des origines à la Renaissance* [Conférences Léopold Delisle] (Paris, 2001), 74–89; the various articles in *Libri e lettori nel mondo bizantino. Guida storica e critica*, ed., G. Cavallo, Biblioteca universale Laterza 325 (Roma, 1990) and in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen*, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium 1971 (Washington, 1975).

out, etc.) take place between two quires, or when several changes occur at the same spot. Temporarily such places are called “major discontinuities”⁵ and each side of such a discontinuity is called a “major unit.”

Here is an abridged list of the most important major discontinuity types. The terminology presented below must be considered a temporary one, whose limited scope extends only to the current article:

- Type 1: major discontinuities with no meaning either for the making or for the subsequent history of the book. Temporarily this is called a “casual discontinuity”. In this case, there are only one Production Unit (PU) and one book (or Circulation Unit) to account with.⁶
- Type 2: when both sides of a major discontinuity have been produced to circulate together or, at least, to not circulate independently. However, for reasons linked to the making process, an important

⁵ In specialized literature, major discontinuities are called various names like “breaks,” “césure,” “snodo” etc. “Classical” or recent works on the structure of the manuscripts include: J. P. Gumbert, “L’unité codicologique ou: à quoi bon les cahiers?” *Gazette du Livre Médiéval* 14 (1989): 4–8; Idem, “Codicological Units: Towards a Terminology for the Stratigraphy of the Non-Homogeneous Codex,” *Segno e testo* 2 (2004): 17–42; E. Kwakkel, “Towards a Terminology for the Analysis of Composite Manuscripts,” *Gazette du Livre Médiéval* 41 (2002): 12–9; M. Maniaci, “La struttura delle Bibbie Atlantiche,” in *Le Bibbie Atlantiche. Il Libro delle Scritture tra monumentalità e rappresentazione*, eds., M. Maniaci and G. Orofino (Milano, 2000), 47–60; Eadem, “Il codice greco ‘non unitario’. Tipologia e terminologia,” *Segno e testo* 2 (2004), 75–107; B. Olsen, “L’élément codicologique,” in *Recherches de codicologie comparée, la composition du codex au Moyen-Âge en Orient et en Occident*, ed., P. Hoffmann (Paris, 1998), 105–29; P. Robinson, “The ‘Booklet’, a Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts,” *Codicologica* 3 (1980): 46–69; now also Eadem, “The Format of Books: Books, Booklets and Rolls,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain 2, 1100–1400*, eds., N. Morgan and R. Thompson (Cambridge, 2008): 41–54, spec. 50–5.—A full state of the research on this topic and a thorough discussion of discontinuities and their corresponding parts in a manuscript is soon to be found in P. Andrist, P. Canart, and M. Maniaci, *La syntaxe du codex*, Bibliologia, forthcoming in 2011 (for a summary presentation of it, see P. Andrist, P. Canart, and M. Maniaci, “L’analyse structurelle du codex, clef de sa genèse et de son histoire,” in *The Legacy of Bernard de Montfaucon: Three Hundred Years of Greek Handwriting. Proceedings of the Seventh International Colloquium of Greek Palaeography (Madrid—Salamanca, 15–20 September 2008)*, eds., A. García and I. Martín, Bibliologia 31 (Turnhout, 2010): 289–299. See also P. Andrist, “La description des manuscrit médiévaux sur Internet: un regard critique,” in *La descrizione dei manoscritti: esperienze a confronto*, dirs., E. Crisci, M. Maniaci and P. Orsini, Studi e ricerche del Dipartimento di Filologia e Storia 1 (Cassino, 2010): 19–45.

⁶ For an explanation on Production Units and Circulation Units, see Andrist, Canart, Maniaci, “L’analyse”, op. cit. n. 5, and Idem, *La syntaxe*, op. cit. n. 5.

change occurred between two quires. As a result this discontinuity has a meaning for the making of the original book but not *a priori* for its subsequent history. In this case, there is only one PU and one book to be analyzed. Temporarily it is called a “working discontinuity” and each side of it is called a “working unit” (see, for example, *Marc. gr.* 107, below p. 563, or *Vat. gr.* 2574-I, p. 574).

- Type 3: when at least one side of a major discontinuity was not produced to be joined to and circulate with the other. Temporarily it is called a “production discontinuity.” Four common situations are:⁷
 - A1: when a younger part is produced to be attached to an older one. This happens, for example, when someone adds one or two quires to an already existing manuscript, in order to complete a series of texts (see, for example, *Laurent. plut.* 9.14, below p. 566; or *Vat. gr.* 719, below p. 575); or when a quire is entirely restored (see, for example, *Sinait. gr.* 399, below p. 562). In this case, there are two PUs to consider, one on each side of the discontinuity, and two books: the older one, independent from the supplementary quires, and both parts put together; as a result, the second PU do not match the second book! Temporarily it is called a “supplement discontinuity”; the older part is called a “supplemented unit” and the younger part is called a “supplementing unit” no matter how big it is.
 - A2: when a “supplement text” is added on a already existing part, without any new writing support. Like in A1, there is a “supplement discontinuity”, as well as two PUs and two books, which do not correspond to one another.
 - A3: “Overlapped supplement discontinuities” is the temporary name of “supplement discontinuities” occurring when the text belonging to the younger part starts on an empty space at the end of the “supplemented unit.” Like in A1, there are two PUs and two books, which do not correspond to one another.
 - A4: when each part was not specifically produced to circulate with the other one. This happens for example, when two books are joined together by the same binding at a later time, or when a scribe or a scriptorium produces units in such a way that they can either be joined to other units or bound separately (see, for example, *Vat. gr.* 577, below p. 557; or *Ottob. gr.* 414, below p. 568).

⁷ Named according to Andrist, Canart, Maniaci, *La syntaxe*, op. cit. n. 5.

Then two PUs but three books (or at least potential books) have to be analyzed: both parts independently and, thirdly, both parts together. Temporarily it is called an “independent” or “autonomous production discontinuity” and each side of it is called an “independent” or “autonomous production unit” or “autonomous unit.”

- 3) A central issue of manuscript analysis in the current project has been to find out how many PUs and books there are in each analyzed manuscript and how extensive each one of them is. The primary goal has been to identify PUs where all the written pages or a major part of them (at least 40%) are taken up by one or several texts against the Jews. Since no satisfying definition of what a *contra Iudaeos* text is has been given so far,⁸ all the texts which present themselves as such, or are widely accepted as such, or can reasonably be argued as being such, are taken into account. It seems in fact difficult to argue that *contra Iudaeos* polemics is a major theme of the book when it is under 40%.
- 4) Here, the presented manuscripts books are classified firstly into three periods:
 - A) before the eleventh century;
 - B) from the beginning of the twelfth century to the sack of Constantinople by the crusaders (roughly the eleventh and the twelfth century);
 - C) from this crusade to the fall of Constantinople in the fifteenth century.

Secondly, within each period they are presented according to one of the following categories to which they belong. This grouping was not based on a preconceived typology, but on what seemed to be the natural grouping of the observed manuscripts which appeared to classify “naturally” into three unequally large groups; again, the limited scope of the following working terminology extends only to the current article:

⁸ See P. Andrist, *Le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée. Étude des sources et du contexte littéraire* (Thèse of the University of Geneva, 2001), 489–92, accessed August 2010, www.unige.ch/cyberdocuments/theses2001/AndristP/these.pdf.

- Category 1: when about half of an original book is taken up by polemical material *contra Iudaeos* (temporarily named “Half books *contra Iudaeos*” or simply “Half books”);
- Category 2: when almost all of it is taken up by such material (temporarily named “quasi full books”);
- Category 3: when all of it is dedicated to such polemics (temporarily named “full books”).

Within each category, important aspects under scrutiny include:

- if a book includes one or many texts (“mono-textual” vs. “multi-textual”);
- if a book is made up of one or many PUs (“mono-unit” vs. “multi-unit”);
- in the case of a “multi-unit book”, if it ends with a *contra Iudaeos* PU of smaller size (see Modena, B. Estense, Cod. α.P.6.11, below p. 579).

The resulting sub-categories are exemplified by one or two manuscripts, which also allow for the presentation of the kind of methodological problems this enquiry deals with. Sometimes extra examples are given. Not every sub-category is found in each period.

- 5) From a historical perspective, it was deemed important to mention other manuscripts whose relevant material extends to more than one text, but is not abundant enough for the codex to be considered a *contra Iudaeos* book. In this case, no matter how strong the statements in the texts are, if *contra Iudaeos* polemics do not take up at least 40% of a book, it is reported in a separate “minor topic” section inside each period. This section includes books of the following three extra minor categories:
 - Category 4: manuscripts with “minor clusters of relevant texts.” These are manuscripts with an unusual but not extensive series of contiguous *contra Iudaeos* texts. There are some chances that the book producer—the scribe, his master, his “client” or whoever decided on the content of the book—is responsible for grouping all or part of these texts together. Texts that are traditionally grouped together, like the *Homilies contra Iudaeos* of John Chrysostomus, do not make a “minor cluster” but are counted as one unit; however, if they are grouped with other anti-Jewish

texts (from Chrysostomus or other authors), they might be then taken into account (see below p. 563, *Marc. gr.* 107).⁹

- Category 5: manuscripts with “scattered relevant texts.” These are manuscripts where non-contiguous *contra Iudaeos* texts appear in an unusual sequence. Similar to the “minor clusters,” the book producer could be responsible for grouping all or part of these texts together.
- Category 6: manuscripts with a “corpus including relevant texts.”¹⁰ These are recurrent series of texts or series of excerpts from one or several texts, in which there are more than one *contra Iudaeos* piece. Contrary to the two previous categories, a corpus does not primarily bear witness to the interest of the book producer for *contra Iudaeos* polemics, but to the interest of who gathered the texts into the corpus. For example, the *Florilegium Coislianum secundum alphabeti litteras dispositum* was copied into *Paris. gr.* 924¹¹ in the tenth century: numbers 118 (*Kephalaia epaporetika*) and 119 (a text Περὶ ἱερέων) are related to polemics *contra Iudaeos* but this is the normal sequence of these texts in this corpus (and they are not a PU).

Corpora are also a potential source for independently circulating polemical material. For example, chapter 31 of the *Doctrina patrum*, CPG 7781, happens to be found independently from the other chapters, for example in *Vat., reg. gr. Pii II* 47 (see below, p. 563), or in the corpus of *Ambros. H* 257 inf. (gr. 1041; see below p. 571).

⁹ Again, in Byzantine liturgy there are times during the year when material *contra Iudaeos* was traditionally used in churches more often than during the rest of the year. For example, at the beginning of the year, one finds such material both in the *Vita Basilii* (Jan. 1) and in the *Vita Silverstri* (Jan. 2). As well, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, one traditionally finds stories of images working miracles on Jews; and of course, around Easter many sermons make the Jews responsible for the death of Jesus. However, even though there is often some kind of “concentration” around this themes in liturgical manuscripts (menaea, homeliars, etc.) at those times of the year, these series are highly traditional and generally do not take up a substantial part of a production unit. Thus it does not make them *contra Iudaeos* books. In practice, unusually large groupings of such texts are candidates for the “minor clusters” sub-category and might be discussed below (see *Marc. gr.* VII, 31 below p. 581).

¹⁰ Maniaci, “Il codice,” op. cit. n. 5: 83–6.

¹¹ Cat. Omont, RO 192, t. 1: 177; M. Richard, “Les florilèges spirituels grecs,” reprinted in *Opera Minora* (Turnhout, 1976), t. 1, Nr. 1, col. 485 (= *Florilegium damascenianum* 10). V. Déroche, “La polémique anti-judaïque au VI^{ème} et au VII^{ème} siècle. Un memento inédit, les Képhalaia,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 275–311, spec. p. 298 (ms. Q) reprinted in G. Dagrón, V. Déroche, *Juifs et chrétiens en Orient byzantin*, Bilan de recherche 5, Paris 2010.

- 6) No manuscripts are formally described in this article, even though their structure and content are sometimes sketched in “skeleton boxes.”¹² These “boxes” should help readers to clearly distinguish between the various PUs of a discussed manuscript and to see which texts there are in each PU. These boxes are hierarchically divided into PUs, each one introduced by a heading and a short informational paragraph, which mentions at least its probable date. In multi-units manuscripts, these headings are numbered with upper-case letters and the supplementary paragraph generally includes information on its writing medium (i.e. parchment, paper), scripture, layout, etc., which should help the reader to see the potential relations between the several units of the manuscript. Dash lines symbolize “working discontinuities.” The texts are mentioned under the heading of the PU they belong to and are usually numbered according to the main catalogue where the manuscript is described.

The real nature of a discontinuity is not always clear and can sometimes be argued in different ways. It is thus very important to note that, in reality, skeleton boxes sketch potential or probable working units and PUs: these are units that, upon analysis, seem to be most probably the “true” working units and PUs of the manuscript.

A. BEFORE THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

Very few *contra Iudaeos* books have been identified so far as dating from before the eleventh century.

A.1 *Vaticanus gr. 577—Autonomous “full book”*

Sometimes, a relevant text is found in what is clearly a “major unit” that, theoretically, could have circulated independently from the other considered “major units” of the manuscript; but it is also possible that in reality this never happened and the considered units have always

¹² These small “skeleton boxes” are a very abridged version of the “hat” section of the author’s normal manuscript descriptions; see P. Andrist, *Les manuscrits grecs conservés à la Bibliothèque de la Bourgeoisie de Berne—Burgerbibliothek Bern. Règles de catalogage* (Bern, 2007), 18–20; also available at www.codices.ch (accessed August 2010).

circulated together. This is the case of *Vat. gr. 577*,¹³ which can easily be divided into three ancient units.

Città del Vaticano, BAV, *Vat. gr. 577*

(f. III, 1) see Unit D.

A. (f. 2–34, 35ra, vb, 36–40, 42–57, 59–64, 66–75) main unit 1, partially restored, see Unit D

S. X.—(f. 2) initial pyle.

1a. (f. 2r–75r) **Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Adversus Iudaeos orationes* 1, 4–8, CPG 4327.**

– (f. 75v) originally empty.

B. (f. 76–165) main unit 2

S. X.—Parchemin.—(f. 76) initial pyle.—Same layout and apparently same hand as in Unit A.—Same titel as at the begining of Unit A.

2–6. (f. 76r–165va) *Idem, Opera miscellanea*.—See catalogue and Voicu, CCG 6.

– (f. 165vb) empty.

C. (f. 166–301) main unit 3

S. X—Like Unit B.—(f. 166r) initial pyle.

7–11a. (f. 166r–301v) *Idem, Opera miscellanea*.—See catalogue and Voicu, CCG 6.

D. (f. III-1, *passim*, 302–305) restoration leaves. Mainly on Unit A

S. XV^{1/2}.—Paper.—Hand of <Geörgios Drazinos>, RGK 3, Nr. 101.

– (f. IIIrv) originally empty.

0. (f. 1rv) pinax of the volume.

1b. (f. 35rb–va, 36, 41, 58, 65) **restoration of Unit A, see above.**

11b. (f. 302r–305r sup.) end of *Idem, In illud: vidua eligatur*, CPG 4386.

– (f. 305r inf.) originally empty.

Fig. 1: “Skeleton” of *Vat. gr. 577*.

It is difficult to assess whether the three units were produced together in order to be attached to each other, or to potentially circulate autonomously (as presented here). On one hand, the three parts have the same handwriting and the same layout; together they form a coherent series on John Chrysostomus and are not broken by incompatible quire

¹³ Cat. Devresse, RO 831: 484–5. Texts are numbered according to Voicu, CCG 6:100; M.-L. Agati, *La minuscola “bouletée,” Littera Antiqua* 9, 2 vols. (Città del Vaticano, 1992), vol. 1: 1–24; *passim*, 286–7, 311, 315, 200 Tab.—New description in *Les livres manuscrits*, op. cit. n. 2.

numberings. On the other hand, the initial pyle on each ancient unit and the empty space at the end of Units A and B gives the impression that the three units were produced autonomously and could have circulated independently (type 3b). One would thus recognize 3 PUs and consider Unit A as a full *contra Iudaeos* book (at least a potential one). One has probably to do here with a “modular” production technique, where sections of the *corpus chrysostomicum* were produced independently, but always to finally be joined to the other sections (a special case of type 2).¹⁴

A.2 Manuscripts difficult to assess

Some mutilated manuscripts are difficult to classify, for example:

- The palimpsest part of *Vat. gr. 770* and the *Crypt. A.δ.VI* (gr. 389), from the eighth or the ninth century¹⁵ contains the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, CPG 7794. As reconstructed by Maria Luisa Agati and Paul Canart, it was spread over at least 72 folios. However, the beginning and the end are lost and it is impossible to recognize the peculiarities of the original book, even though all of it or the major part of it was most probably taken up by this text.
- *Vat. gr. 2049*, f. 40–45 and *Vat. gr. 2121*, f. 9–14¹⁶ are fragments from the same PU, which was copied in the tenth or eleventh century and which used to contain the *Homilies contra Iudaeos* of John Chrysostomus, CPG 4327. The broader content and organization of this previous PU is unfortunately not known.
- The London, Lambeth palace, Sion Arc.L.40.2\G 6¹⁷ is made up of 4 PUs. Unit C (p. 233–264, 269–276), which used to be in another volume, can be dated to the second half of the tenth century. The two first quires contain relevant anonymous material: (p. 233–259

¹⁴ See Maniaci, *La struttura*, cit. n. 5: 54–8.

¹⁵ Cat. Devreesse, RO 832: 285–6; M.-L. Agati and P. Canart, “Le palimpseste du Vaticanus graecus 770 et du Cryptensis A.δ.VI (gr. 368),” *Νέα Πόμνη. Rivista di ricerche bizantinistiche* 3 (2006): 131–56; E. Crisci, *I palinsesti di Grottaferrata. Studio codicologico e paleografico*, 2 vols., Pubblicazioni dell’Università degli Studi di Cassino. Sezione di Studi Filologici, Letterari, Storici, artistici e geografici 2 (Napoli, 1990), 72–3; S. Lucà, “Su origine e datazione del *Crypt. B.β.VI* (f. 1–9). Appunti sulla collezione manoscritta greca di Grottaferrata,” *Testi e studi bizantino-neoellenici* 14 (2003): 145–224; spec. pp. 150, 201 et n. 231; Robertson, spec. pp. 26–34 (ms. R); A. Turyn, *Codices Graeci Vaticani Saeculis XIII et XIV* (Città del Vaticano, 1964), 61–3, Tab. 35.

¹⁶ Uncatalogued manuscripts. Voicu, CCG 6: 239–40.

¹⁷ M. Aubineau, “Un recueil de haeresibus: Sion College, cod. gr. 6,” *Revue des études grecques* 80 (1967): 425–9. *The Greek Manuscript Collection of Lambeth Palace Library: An Exhibition Held on the Occasion of the 21st International Byzantine Congress London, 22–23 August 2006* (London, 2006), 54.

- sup.) *Eclogae Veteris testamenti de sancta Trinitate et de incarnatione*; (p. 259 inf.–264) two formulas *De abiuratione* for the Jews. How this material used to be organized in the original manuscript is no longer known, but as its two last preserved bifolios (p. 269–276)¹⁸ contain legal material, it seems that the relevant material was not prevalent in that previous codex (for a possible comparison, see below p. 580 about *Palat. gr.* 233). What remains from the manuscript is a polemical unit. But was the original manuscript voluntarily mutilated in order to remove this polemical section and have it circulate independently? Did it happen by chance? Or were these folios intentionally removed from the original manuscript to join them to another manuscript and make up a section against the Jews in Unit B, next to a section about iconoclasm? The answer is not clear. One just observes that the remaining PU was restored in the eleventh or twelfth century by someone who preserved the polemical folios and completed the legal part of the remaining unit.
- The two last units of *Paris. gr.* 1084¹⁹ are entirely dedicated to polemical *contra Iudaeos*: (f. 206–246) *De gestis in Perside* (= *Disputatio de religione*), CPG 6968. (f. 247–273) *Disputatio Silvestri*, BHG 1628–1635. But it is not clear whether these units are working units or production units. Besides, they are sometimes dated to the eleventh century.
 - The second PU of *Ottob. gr.* 414 could also date from the first period (see below, p. 568).

A.3 “Minor topic”

Examples of minor clusters:

- Mosq., GIM, *Synod. gr.* 394 (Vladimir, 231; Matthaei, 302):²⁰ a one-unit manuscript, copied by Stylianos in 932 (see catalogue)²¹ and

¹⁸ P. 265–268 is a restoration bifolio, maybe from the end of the eleventh or from the twelfth century.

¹⁹ Cat. Omont, RO 192, t. 1: 217; E. Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sasaniden*, TU 19 (1899) (n. F. 4.3), spec. pp. 62–66 (ms. A); F. Halkin, *Manuscrits grecs de Paris. Inventaire hagiographique*, Subsidia hagiographica 44 (1968): 110.

²⁰ Cat. Vladimir, RO 1736: 296–301; Fonkič, RO 1737: 83–4; V. Déroche, “La polémique,” op. cit. n. 11, spec. p. 297 (ms. M); L. G. Westerink, “Marginalia by Arethas in Moscow Greek Manuscript 231,” *Byzantion* 42 (1972): 196–244.

²¹ Sloping scripture, apparently different from RGK 2, Nr. 506.

- owned by Arethas, containing an unusual series: a. (f. 77v–83r) excerpts from John Chrysostomus, *Homilies contra Iudaeos*, CPG 4327. b. (f. 83v–86r sup.) *Kephalaia epaporetika*, CPG 7804.
- *Ambros.* C 135 inf. (gr. 862):²² the main PU of the manuscript dates from the tenth century and contains works of Gregorius Nyssenus. Relevant texts are: a. (f. 314v–317v) a polemical excerpt from his *Oratio catechetica*, CPG 3150. b. (f. 318r–334v) the pseudonymous *Testimonia adversus Iudaeos*, CPG 3221. This is a non-traditional grouping.

Examples of a corpus with relevant texts:

- Mosq., GIM, *Synod. gr.* 265 (Vladimir, 197; Matthaei, 252), s. IX/X,²³ apparently a one-unit codex: on f. 142r–241r, there is a corpus about the images with some scattered relevant material: a. (f. 171v inf.–177r) Leontius Neapolitanus, *Contra Iudaeos orationes 1–5*, CPG 7885. b. (f. 213r–217r sup.) Athanasius Alexandrinus, *Narratio de cruce seu imagine Berytensi*, CPG 2262. c. (f. 233v inf.–234r sup.) *De gestis in Perside* (= *Disputatio de religione*), CPG 6968, small excerpt. Outside the corpus, one notes also: d. (f. 299r–322v) *De gestis in Perside* (= *Disputatio de religione*), CPG 6968. Whoever gathered the texts a–c into the corpus was clearly not interested into *contra Iudaeos* polemics.

A.4 Remarks on the first period

For at least two reasons one expects to find few examples of such old *contra Iudaeos* books. First and foremost, the chances of preserving any type of book are obviously much smaller when the general amount of preserved manuscripts is small. Secondly, there are often doubts

²² Cat. Martini, Bassi, RO 1694: 959–61; C. Pasini, *Inventario agiografico dei manuscritti greci dell’Ambrosiana*, *Subsidia hagiographica* 84 (2003): 186–7.—Further bibliographical references in C. Pasini, *Bibliografia dei manoscritti greci dell’Ambrosiana (1857–2006)*, *Bibliotheca erudita. Studi e documenti di storia e filologia* 30 (Milano, 2007): 335.

²³ Cat. Vladimir, RO 1736: 226–30; Fonkič, RO 1737: 73–4; A. Alexakis, *Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115 and its Archetype*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 34 (Washington, 1996), spec. pp. 100, 335–42; Bratke, “Das sogenannte,” op. cit. n. 19, spec. pp. 71–2 (ms. G). The date is disputed, see Alexakis, *Codex*, op. cit. supra, p. 100. V. Déroche, “L’Apologie contre les juifs de Léontios de Néapolis,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 12 (1994): 45–104, ms. K reprinted in Dagron, Déroche, *Juifs et chrétiens*, op. cit. n. 11.

about the date of a unit that could also belong to the second period. In spite of this, in quite a series of manuscripts from period A one observes minor clusters of polemical texts. These clusters indirectly show that an interest in such polemics existed, but only as a minor theme. Thus, paradoxically, in spite of this extent interest, no clearly *contra Iudaeos* book from that time has been identified so far.

B. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE ELEVENTH CENTURY TO THE SACK OF CONSTANTINOPLE BY THE CRUSADERS

The second period is more significant. It includes the Greek manuscripts produced roughly during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, until the sack of Constantinople in 1204.

B.1 *Sinaiticus gr. 399*—*multi-textual "Half book"*

*Sinait. gr. 399*²⁴ exemplifies a type of manuscript where about half of the pages of the original book are taken up by more than one *contra Iudaeos* text.

<p>Sinai, M. Hag. Aikaterinís, gr. 399</p> <p>A.1 (f. 3–12) restoration unit S. XVI. Paper.</p> <p>1a. (f. 3r–12v) Maximus Confessor, <i>Capita de caritate</i>, CPG 7693 (restored part); see A.2.</p> <p>A.2 (f. 13–208) main unit S. XII. Parchment.</p> <p>1b. (f. 13r–99v) Maximus Confessor, <i>Capita de caritate</i>, CPG 7693 (ancient part); see A.1.</p> <p>2. (f. 100r–103v sup.) theological chapters in alphabetical order.</p> <p>3. (f. 103v inf.–204v sup.) <i>Dialogus Timothei et Aquilae</i>, CPG 7794.</p> <p>4. (f. 204v inf.–208v) <i>Dialogi Anastasiani</i>.</p>
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Fig. 2: "Skeleton" of *Sinait. gr. 399*.

²⁴ Cat. Gardthausen, RO 2169: 95; Kamil, RO 2173: 86 (Nr. 623); Clark, RO 2174: 6; P. Andrist, "Un témoin oublié du Dialogue de Timothée et Aquila et des Anastasiana antiudaica (*Sinaiticus gr. 399*)," *Byzantion* 75 (2005): 9–24; Idem, "Trois témoins athonites mal connus des Anastasiana antiudaica (et du Dialogue Timothei et Aquilae): Lavra K 113; Vatopedi 555; Karakallou 60.—"Essai sur la tradition des Anastasiana antiudaica, notamment du Dialogue Papisci et Philonis cum monacho," *Byzantion* 76

If one assumes that the first quire (f. 3–12) replaces an original quaternion, one is able to reconstruct the following content for the original codex: out of the original 408 written pages, the last 210 ones are taken up firstly by one long *contra Iudaeos* text (about 202 pages, 50% of the book), followed by 2 pieces of the *Dialogi Anastasiani* (about 8 pages).

Some other manuscripts are of the same type, for example:

- *Reg. gr. Pii II* 47:²⁵ out of a total of 310 pages, 144 are taken up by the same long text as in the *Sinait. gr.* 399 (127 pages, 41% of the book) and a shorter text, chapter 31 of the *Doctrina patrum*, CPG 7781 (17 pages, about 5% of the book).
- *Coisl.* 299 is presented below (s. p. 564). According to our reconstruction, the first PU used to be a “full book.” However, as soon as Unit B was attached to it, perhaps soon after both units were produced—both were copied by the same hand—but at the latest at the beginning of the twelfth century, the manuscript immediately became a “Half book *contra Iudaeos*” (see below).

B.2 *Marcianus gr. 107* (coll. 572)—“Minor cluster” or multi-textual “Half book”?

For methodological reasons it is worth presenting *Marc. gr. 107* (coll. 572).²⁶ Like *Vat. gr. 377*, this manuscript of John Chrysostomus is clearly made of three units (f. 1–147; f. 148–233; f. 234–317), which seem to be copied by the same hand; the general order of the homilies matches other manuscripts (see *Marc. gr. 105* (coll. 376), 106 (coll. 429)). As a result the manuscript could be interpreted as one PU divided into three “working units,” with a “minor cluster” of relevant texts. However, the page layout at the end of f. 233v and the way the homilies in the third unit (f. 234–317) are numbered, tend to support the idea that the third unit was originally not meant to circulate with the two other ones, or at least it was produced as to potentially circulate independently. On the contrary, the two first units seem to have

(2006): 402–22, spec. pp. 418–22 *passim*; I. Aulisa and C. Schiano, *Dialogo di Papisco e Filone giudei con un monaco. Testo, traduzione e commento*, Quaderni di Vetera Christianorum 30 (Bari, 2005): 167.—Manuscript studied on microfilm.

²⁵ Cat. Stevenson, RO 825: 164–6. Amongst a very abundant literature: S. Lucà, “Scritture e libri della ‘scuola niliana,’” in *Scritture, libri e testi nelle aree provinciali di Bisanzio. Atti del seminario di Erice (18–25 settembre 1988)*, eds., G. Cavallo, G. De Gregorio and M. Maniaci, Vol. 1: 319–87, 24 tab.; spec. pp. 334, 343 n. 108, 380 n. 276; Robertson, spec. pp. 4–11 (ms. V).—New description in *Les livres manuscrits*, op. cit. n. 2.

²⁶ Cat. Mioni, RO 2390: 151–2.

been copied in order to circulate together. This is why our preferred interpretation is to present the manuscript in two PUs:

Venezia, BN Marciana, gr. Z. 107 (coll. 572)	
A. (f. 1–147; 148–233) main Unit 1	
S. XII.—Parchment.	
	Working unit 1
1.	(f. 1r–75ra sup.) Iohannes Chrysostomus, <i>De incomprehensibili Dei natura</i> , CPG 4318 (hom. 1–5, 11, 5?–8).
2.	(f. 79ra inf.–121vb sup.) Idem, <i>Ad eos qui scandalizati sunt</i> , CPG 4401.
3.	(f. 121vb inf.–147v) Idem, <i>Contra Iudaeos et gentiles quod Christus sit Deus</i> , CPG 4326.
	Working unit 2
4.	(f. 148r–233v) Idem, <i>Adversus Iudaeos orationes</i> , CPG 4327 (hom. 1, 4–8).
B. (f. 234–317) main Unit 2	
S. XII.—Parchment.—Same hand as in Unit A.	
5.	(f. 234r–307r) Idem, <i>De sacerdotio</i> , CPG 4316 (hom. 1–6).—Numbered “ιζ”, “β”—“ζ”
–	(f. 307v sup.) empty.
6.	(f. 307v inf.–317v) Idem, <i>In illud: vidi dominum</i> , CPG 4417 (hom. 1–3, 6).—Numbered “α”—“δ”

Fig. 3: “Skeleton” of Marc. gr. 107.

Unit A can thus be analyzed separately: 224 pages out of 466 pages (48% of the PU) are taken up by relevant material; this is enough to make it a polemical “half book.” Besides, compared to other chrysostomian manuscripts like *Marc. gr. 105* or *106*, *Marc. gr. 107* contains an extra *Adversus Iudaeos* text before the *Homilies contra Iudaeos* of Chrysostomus. This is unusual and might hint to some particular interest by the book producer in *contra Iudaeos* polemics.

B.3 *Coislianus 299*—“Quasi full books,” with several texts

*Coisl. 299*²⁷ is well-known by historians of Byzantine polemics against the Jews, because each of its three *contra Iudaeos* texts is either the

²⁷ Cat. Devresse RO 1907: 282–3; RGK 2, Nr. 440. Amongst an abundant literature: G. Bardy, “Les Trophées de Damas. Controverse judéo-chrétienne du VII^e siècle,”

best or the only surviving “witness” figuring in the current reference edition.

Paris, BnF, Coisl. 299

Extra element: (f. I–II) fragment of a manuscript, used as guard leaves.—
S. IX.—Parchment.

0. Ps. Chrysostomus, *In sanctam Pentecostem* (fragment).

A.1 (f. 1–3, 8–181, 181a, 182–189) main unit 1

S. XI.—Parchment.—Hand of Nicolas, cleric (see f. 189v and Unit B).

1a. (f. 1–3, 8–69ra) *Doctrina Iacobi nuper baptizati*, CPG 7793
(older leaves; see A.2).

2. (f. 69rb–122ra) *Dialogus Timothei et Aquilae*, CPG 7794.

3. (f. 122rb–164ra sup.) *Trophaea Damasci*, CPG 7797.

4.1. (f. 164ra inf.–168rb sup.) transition text *contra Monophysitas*.

4.2. (f. 168v–189va sup.) *Dialogus contra Monophysitas*, CPG 7798.

– (f. 189va inf.) *subscriptio* in verses; attributing the copy to Nicolas.

– (f. 189vb) empty.

A.2. (f. 4–7) restoration quire

S. XII–XIII ante 1218 ut vid.—Parchment.

1b. (f. 4r–7v) *Doctrina Iacobi nuper baptizati*, CPG 7793
(restored leaves; see A.1).

B. (f. 190–293) main unit 2

S. XI.—Parchment.—Hand of <Nicolas, cleric> (see Unit A.1).

5. (f. 190r–293v) dossier *contra Monophysitas*, see catalogue.

Fig. 4: “Skeleton” of Coisl. 299.

The manuscript has a complex structure. It underwent several transformations, including a restoration probably at the beginning of the

Patrologia Orientalis 15 (1920): 172–292, spec. pp. 183–4; C. N. Constantidines and R. Browning, *Dated Greek Manuscripts from Cyprus to the Year 1570*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 30, = *Texts and Studies of the History of Cyprus* 18 (Washington, 1993): 25; V. Déroche, “*Doctrina Iacobi Nuper Baptizati*,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 47–229, 248–73, spec. p. 47 (ms. P; reprinted in Dagron, Déroche, *Juifs et chrétiens*, op. cit. n. 11); Ehrhard, t. 1: 709–10; Halkin, *Manuscrits grecs*, op. cit. n. 19: 272; E. Lambertz, “Die Handschriftenproduktion in den Athosklöstern bis 1453,” in *Scripture*, eds., Cavallo, de Gregorio, Maniaci, op. cit. n. 25, t. 1: 25–78, 19 Tab., spec. p. 49 n. 92; J.-M. Olivier, *Diodori Tarsensis Commentarii in Psalmos. I Commentarii in Psalmos I–L*, *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* 6 (Turnhout, 1980), xiv; Robertson, spec. pp. 11–4 (ms. P).

thirteenth century on Mont Athos. However, its oldest part is made up of two PUs from the eleventh century, divided by a major discontinuity after f. 189. Even though both parts are in the same hand, the layout of f. 189v and the *subscriptio* of Nicolas clearly show Unit A was once intended to be independent and end at that point.²⁸

From this first unit, 184 folios have been preserved and about 20 have been lost, 15 of which are from the three *contra Iudaeos* dialogues. As a result, the original unit used to amount to about 204 folios, 179 of which were dedicated to polemics against the Jews. In the eleventh century Nicolas copied a book of about 200 leaves, 85% thereof dedicated to *contra Iudaeos* polemics.

Unfortunately one does not know where the manuscript was written. In the mid-seventeenth century, it was brought to France from the monastery of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, where it had been restored in the early thirteenth century. But it was most probably not copied on the Great Lavra.²⁹

B.4 *Laurentianus plut. 9.14—Ottobonianus gr. 414—Possible “quasi full book”*

In multi-unit manuscripts, it is sometimes difficult to assess if a specific PU was really copied in order to potentially circulate autonomously.

*Laurent. plut. 9.14*³⁰ can be analyzed as composed of four PUs:

²⁸ Reproduced in N. Bonwetsch, “Ein antimonophysitischer Dialog,” *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse, s. n.* (1909): 123–49, spec. p. 149.

²⁹ On f. 1r, the manuscript also bears an owner’s note from the unknown monastery of the Theotokos of the Phovinis. This stay should have taken place before the manuscript was in the Great Lavra, probably as the first folio was already lost. One does not know where the manuscript was before that time.

³⁰ Cat. Bandini, RO 995, t. 1: 412; Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” op. cit. n. 27, *passim* spec. p. 48; Ehrhard, t. 1: 632–5; F. Halkin, “Les manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Laurentienne à Florence. Inventaire Hagiographique,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 96 (1978): 5–50, spec. pp. 20–1. We do use here the text numbers according to Ehrhard, which take into account the *Vita S. Copris*, whose beginning is lost, see Ehrhard, t. 1, p. 633 n. 2.—Manuscript studied on microfilm. Warm thanks to Renate Burri, who controlled the manuscript for me.—A full electronic facsimile of it is now available on the Internet (<http://teca.bmlonline.it>—accessed August 2010).

Firenze, B. Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 9.14

A. (f. 2–160) first unit?

S. XI.—Parchment.—27 lines.

1–15. (f. 2r–160v) second volume of a menologium of May.

– (f. 160v) re-inked endnote, apparently from the scribe's hand,
 “ἕως ὧδε τὸ πέρασ τῶν ἀναγνωσμάτων.”³¹

B. (f. 161–259) second unit?

S. XI.—Parchment.—Same hand as in Unit A.—28 lines.

16. (f. 161r–259v sup.) Palladius, *Dialogus de vita Iohannis Chrysostomi*, CPG 6037.

– (f. 259v inf.) originally empty.

C. (f. 260–283) third unit?

S. XI.—Parchment.—Same hand as in Unit A.—26 lines.

17. (f. 260r–283r) Georgius Pisida, *Vita S. Anasstasii maryris*, BHG 86.

– (f. 283v) empty.

D. (f. 284–418) fourth unit?

S. XI.—Parchment.—Same hand as in Unit A.—28 lines.

18. (f. 284r–331v, 388r–403v, 332r–335v) *Doctrina Iacobi nuper baptizati*, CPG 7793.

19. (f. 335v–387v, 404r–418v) Constantinus Iudaeus, BHG 370.

Fig. 5: “Skeleton” of Laurent., plut. 9.14.

Was the large Unit D copied as a separate book (or at least as a potential separate book, see type 3b above) and then added to an already existing book? In that case, Unit D is a “quasi full book *contra Iudaeos*,” with ca. 87% dedicated to this theme. Or did the scribe specifically copy it to join it to the other units? Then Unit D was never a book, and its *Doctrina Iacobi* is an isolated text.

One notices that these texts, that all have to do with hagiography, as well as the notes on f. 160v (which only makes sense if the menologium is followed by another text) were copied by the same hand. On the other hand, each one of the four units is autonomous, including, when necessary, empty space at the end of the unit; besides, their number of lines per page slightly varies: these facts make the reader think they were

³¹ Meaning “the lectures end here.”

produced independently from one another and joined together in a second phase only.

A similar question arises from the second PU of the *Ottob. gr.* 414.³² It is generally dated to the beginning of the eleventh century, as is strongly suggested by the Eastern tables at the end of the PU (but one cannot fully exclude that this table was added to an already existing PU, which could date from the end of the tenth century).

Città del Vaticano, BAV, *Ottob. gr.* 414

A (f. I, 1–26, 26a, 27–76, 76a, 77–143, 145–180) possible older unit
S. X^{ex}/XIⁱⁿ.—Parchment.—Main hand: same hand as in Unit B.—
25–26 lines.

1. (f. Ir–175r sup.) patristic anthology.
2. (f. 175r inf.–180v sup.) tables of patriarchs and kings.
- (f. 180v inf.) empty, with an owner's note of Nicolas Kourtzoula from Zakynthos.

B. (f. 181–185, 185a, 186–229) possible earlier unit
S. X^{ex}/XIⁱⁿ.—Parchment.—Same hand as the main hand in Unit A—
25–26 lines.

3. (f. 181r–226r) *Dialogus Timothei et Aquilae*, CPG 7794.
4. (f. 226v–229v sup.) Gregorius Thaumaturgus, *Disputatio de anima ad Tatianum*, CPG 1773.
5. (f. 229v inf.) table for the date of Easter, for the years 1004–1012.—
Possibly copied later than texts 3 and 4.

C. (f. 230–237)

S. X^{ex}/XIⁱⁿ.—Parchment.—Hand different from the hands in Unit A and B.—26 lines.

6. (f. 230r–237v) Anastasius Sinaita, *De sacra synaxi*, CPG 7750.

Fig. 6: “Skeleton” of *Ottob. gr.* 414.

³² Cat. Feron, Battaglini, RO 814: 225; K. Lake and S. Lake, *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts to the Year 1200*, vol. 7 (Boston, 1937), p. 11, Nr. 270, Pl. 479–481, 492; they distinguish three or four hands; G. Mercati, “I codici greci di Abramo Massad Maronita,” in *Misc. R. P. Athanasio Miller O. S. B.*, *Studia Anselmiana* 27–28 (1951): 15–37; repr. in *Opere Minori* 6, *Studi e Testi* 296 (1984): 327–48; spec. pp. 328–9 n. 4; Idem, “Un antico catalogo greco de’ romani pontefici inediti,” *Studi e documenti di storia e diritto* 12 (1891): 325–43; repr. in *Opere Minori* 1, *Studi e Testi* 76 (1937): 1–19; spec. pp. 8–10.—New description in *Les livres manuscrits*, op. cit. n. 2.

Clearly, Units A and B were produced independently from Unit C. But is it still possible to argue Units A and B were produced independently from one another, while the scribe in Unit B also copied most of Unit A?

The discontinuities before and after Unit B include differences in text, scripture, decoration, and ruling. Text numbering spreads throughout the manuscript but results from a later work. There is also an empty space at the end of Unit A and, possibly at the end of Unit B (if the Easter tables were added later). Finally, one does not see any clear textual link between them. In such a context, it is safer to consider them as most probably produced independently from one another, and to classify Unit B as a “quasi full book.”

Both cases are also reminders of the major peculiarity of “supplementing units” which are “production units” but were never independent books. In both cases, if the polemical unit is a “supplementing unit” with one polemical text, then *contra Iudaeos* polemics cover only about one fourth of the resulting codex, which—consequently—could not be considered as *contra Iudaeos* books.

B.5 *Other manuscripts difficult to assess*

As in period A, mutilated manuscripts are often difficult to assess. Such is, for example, the case of two *Coisliani*:

- *Coisl.* 255³³ is today a mutilated manuscript from the twelfth century that can be partially reconstructed. It probably once used to have at least 278 pages, containing an abridged version of the *Vita Gregentii*, divided into two traditional sections: about 50 pages with the non *contra Iudaeos Leges* and 228 pages with the *Disputatio cum Herbano Iudaeo*, CPG 7009 (about 80% of the 278 pages).

The first question deals with how to analyze such a text: if the *Vita Gregentii* is taken as one work, it would be definitely considered as a *contra Iudaeos* text (with a very long introduction) and thus this manuscript would be one of the oldest preserved “full books *contra Iudaeos*.” If it is rather evaluated as two separated works (thematically related, but not because of *contra Iudaeos* polemics), it is rather a “quasi full book.”

³³ Cat. Devreesse, RO 1907: 233–4; Berger, spec. p. 146 (ms. C); Ehrhard, t. 3: 952; Halkin, *Manuscrits grecs*, op. cit. n. 19: 262.

A second question has to do with the ending of the manuscript: since it is mutilated, it is impossible to know if the *Vita Gregentii* was the only text in it, or if some shorter texts were copied after it. Manuscript Hagion Oros, Lavra, Γ 107 from the thirteenth or the fourteenth century (see below, p. 575) is a parallel witness to the same abridged version of the *Vita* and it takes up the whole manuscript. This strengthens the probabilities that this was also the case in *Coisl.* 255.

- *Coisl.* 111³⁴ could also be a full book with one text. Today it comes in two units: A. (f. 1–3) a supplementing unit, s. XVI.—B. (f. 4–373, problems with folio numbering) s. XII.³⁵ It seems to be the only witness to an unpublished *contra Iudaeos* treaty, CPG 7801, made of at least 51 chapters. Unfortunately, the manuscript is mutilated at both extremities, so that it is again impossible to assess if some other text was originally copied after this treaty.

B.6 “Minor topics”

An impressive example of scattered material is:

- *Paris. gr.* 1115.³⁵ The original unit dates from 1276 and includes 8 scattered texts:
 - 5 texts in an iconophile florilegium: a. (263v inf.–264r sup.) Stephanus Bostrensis, *Contra Iudaeos*, CPG 7790; b. (f. 264r med.) Hieronymus Hierosolymitanus, *Dialogus de trinitate*, CPG 7815; c. (f. 265v inf.–266r sup.) Iohannes Thessalonicensis, *De imaginibus sermo*, CPG 7923; d. (f. 266r inf.–v sup.) *Editus anonymus concilii Nicaei II*; e. (f. 266v–269v) Leontius Neapolitanus, *Contra Iudaeos orationes 1–5*, CPG 7885.

³⁴ Cat. Devresse, RO 1907: 102 with a dating in the fourteenth century. Paul Canart dates it to the twelfth century (private letter). A. Külzer, “*Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos. Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen antijüdischen Dialogliteratur und ihrem Judenbild*,” *Byzantinisches Archiv* 18 (Leipzig, 1999), 13, 68, dates it in 1157 without an explanation.

³⁵ Cat. Omont, RO 192, t. 1: 223; RGK 2, Nr. 330. Amongst an abundant literature due to a heated debate about the iconophile florilegium in this manuscript: Alexakis, “Codex,” op. cit. n. 23; Halkin, *Manuscrits grecs*, op. cit. n. 19: 113; K.-H. Uthemann, “Nochmals zu Stephan von Bostra (CPG 7790) im Parisinus gr. 1115. Ein Testimonium—zwei Quellen,” *JÖB* 50 (2000): 131–7; J. A. Munitiz, “Le Parisinus Graecus 1115: description et arrière-plan historique,” *Scriptorium* 36 (1982): 51–67.

- 3 texts outside the florilegium: f. (f. 121v–124v) excerpt of the *Disputatio Silvestri*, BHG 1628–1635; g. (f. 294–297) *Kephalaia epaporetika*, CPG 7804; h. (f. 302v–306) Athanasius Alexandrinus, *Quaestio ad Antiochum ducem* 137, CPG 7795.

Examples of interesting corpora are:

- *Ambros.* H 257 inf. (gr. 1041),³⁶ f. 143r inf.–160r sup., paralleled in the *Vat. gr.* 2658,³⁷ f. 246v inf.–278v sup.
- the just mentioned iconophile florilegium in *Paris. gr.* 1115 (5 texts).

In the first PU of the *Vatop.* 555³⁸ (f. 1–145, 156–179, 190–219), a mutilated part of the *Quaestio 137 ad Antiochum ducem*, CPG 2257 (f. 58r sup.), is followed by the *Dialogi Anastasiani* (f. 58r inf.–64v sup.). On the one hand, these two texts are mostly found separated from one another. On the other hand, they both belong to the large family of the *Anastasiana antiiudaica* and this *Vatopedinus* manuscript is not the only place where both of them are found together.³⁹ Is it an example of a minor cluster or a small corpus?

B.7 Remarks about the second period

Three remarks can be made about this period:

- Books against the Jews did exist but they definitely do not appear to represent a substantial part of book production. There was some interest in grouping texts related to this topic and spreading them in such a way.
- Even though their numbers do not seem to be high, they are produced in a rather numerous variety of types.

³⁶ Cat. Martini, Bassi, RO 1694: 1108–17; B. Kötter, “Die Überlieferung der Pege Gnoseos des Hl. Johannes von Damaskos,” *Studia Patristica et Byzantina* 5 (1959): 38.—Further bibliographical references in Pasini, *Bibliografia*, op. cit. n. 22: 360–1.

³⁷ Cat. S. Lilla, *Codices Vaticani Graeci. Codices 2644–2663* (Città del Vaticano, 1996), 105–37; Voicu, CCG 6: 271.—New description in *Les livres manuscrits*, op. cit. n. 2.

³⁸ Cat. Eustratiades, Arcadios, RO1122: 112; Andrist, “Trois témoins,” op. cit. n. 24: 411–4; L. Burgmann et al., *Repertorium der Handschriften des byzantinischen Rechts. Teil 1 Die Handschriften des weltlichen Rechts (Nr 1–327)*, *Forschung zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte* 20 (Frankfurt, 1995): 27–9, Nr. 21.

³⁹ P. Andrist, review of *Dialogo*, op. cit. n. 24, by Aulisa and Schiano, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 101 (2008): 787–802, spec. p. 801.

- Interestingly, like in the first period, so far one has not found any definite example of a manuscript or an original, clearly independent PU that is entirely dedicated to *contra Iudaeos* polemics, even though *Paris. gr.* 1084 comes close to it (see above p. 560), and *Coisl.* 255 or *Coisl.* 111 could be one of them (see above p. 569 and 570). This phenomenon is discussed below, after surveying the codices from the third period.

C. AFTER THE CONQUEST OF CONSTANTINOPLE BY THE CRUSADERS

A lot more material has survived until today from this third period than from the previous periods. As a result, much more can be studied, including several types of “full books *contra Iudaeos*.”

C.1 *Marcianus gr.* 521 (coll. 316)—Possible “half book” with several texts

Marc. gr. 521 (coll. 316)⁴⁰ is a complex manuscript. In its current state, its sixth PU (f. 134–200)—copied in the thirteenth century—make up clearly a “half book *contra Iudaeos*” with three texts:

The quires of Unit F, now at the end of the volume, are numbered from “1” to “8” This strengthens the conclusion that these quires were once circulated independently from the other units of today’s manuscript. As a result, it is interesting to note that 50% of Unit F is taken up by three relevant texts.

But how were these quires previously circulated? Were they all the quires of an eight-quire manuscript, or only the eight first quires of a larger manuscript? It is difficult to answer that question. The possible relationship⁴¹ between this series of texts and the collection *de haeresibus* in the codex Wien, ÖNB, theol. gr. 306–307 and Torino, BN, gr. B.iv.22, including fifteen *contra Iudaeos* texts (see below 581), does not help one to extrapolate what the lost content could potentially have been.

⁴⁰ Cat. Mioni, RO 2391: 390–3; P. Andrist, “Pour un répertoire des manuscrits de polémique antijudaïque,” *Byzantion* 70 (2000): 270–306, spec. pp. 297–9; Idem, “Le dialogue,” op. cit. n. 8: 14–5; Berger, 149 (ms. M); C. Schiano, “Dal dialogo al trattato nella polemica anti giudaica. Il Dialogo di Papiscone e Filone e la Disputa contro i giudei di Anastasio abate,” *Vetera Christianorum* 41 (2004): 121–50, spec. pp. 126, 131 n. 39–40, 148 n. 92; M. Sicherl, “Platonismus und Textüberlieferung,” *JÖB* 15 (1966): 201–29.

⁴¹ Andrist, “Pour un répertoire,” op. cit. n. 40: 297–9.

Venezia, BN Marciana, gr. Z. 521 (coll. 316)

F. (f. 134–200)

S. XIII.—Paper without watermarks.—Several hands, sometimes difficult to distinguish.

15. (f. 134r–155v sup.) Theodorianus, *Disputatio Orthodoxi cum Armeniis*.
16. (f. 155v inf.–165r sup.) Ps. Athanasius Alexandrinus, *Dialogus Athanasii et Zacchaei*, CPG 2301 (lost end)
 - (f. 165r inf.–167v) originally empty.—Note from the scribe, explaining why these three leaves were left empty (substantially): “if a christian finds the end of the text and does not copy it on these three pages that are purposely left empty, let it be anathema!”⁴²
18. (f. 168r–171r sup.) Theodorus Abucara, 5 dialogues.
19. (f. 171r inf.–182r sup.) Ps. Gregentius, *Disputatio cum Herbano Iudaeo*, CPG 7009.
20. (f. 182r inf.–196v sup.) *Disputatio Anastasii adversus Iudaeos*, CPG 7772.
21. (f. 196v inf.–200v sup.) Theodorus Abucara, 8 dialogues.
 - (f. 200v inf.) empty.

Supplement text from extra hand e (hand a according to the catalogue) also from the thirteenth century, occupying empty leaves:

17. CPG (f. 165r inf.–167v) Theodoretus Cyrensis, *Eranistes* (excerpt), 6217.

Fig. 7: “Skeleton” of Marc. gr. 521(F).

In any case, since these folios were copied in the thirteenth century and joined to the other units later on in the same century, the making of the manuscript in its current state (outside of restorations and binding) also dates from this time.

⁴² εἰ τις τῶν χριστιανῶν εἰ εὐρήσει τὸ λείπον γεγραμμένον ποῦ καὶ οὐκ ἀναπληρώσει αὐτό, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω. Ἐπὶ τούτῳ γὰρ καὶ τὰ τρία τούτα φύλλα ἐναπελείφθη ἀγράφα. Ἀνάθεμα γοῦν ἔστω καὶ τῷ αὐτὰ τεύλοντι.

C.2 *Vaticanus gr. 2574-I*—Possible mono-textual “Half book”

About *Vat. gr. 2574-I*,⁴³ it is again possible to argue that two materially autonomous units were produced to be together:

Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 2574-I

(f. 10–30, 32–133, 142–183, 185; 186–277, 279–314) one-unit manuscript S. XIV^{4/5}.—Paper.—Hand of Manuel Tzykandylis.

Working or production unit A?

1. (f. 10r–118r sup.) Iohannes Cantacuzenus VI, *Contra sectam Mahometicam apologiae iv.*
– (f. 118r inf.–v) empty.
2. (f. 119r–183v sup.) Idem, *Contra Mahometem orationes iv.*
– (f. 183v inf., 185rv) empty. Today including notes and a small text about the author.

Working or production unit B?

3. (f. 186r–314v) Idem, *Adversus Iudaeos orationes ix.*

Extra elements:
(f. <1–8>, 31, 134–141, 184, 278) restoration leaves.—Generally empty.

Fig. 8: “Skeleton” of *Vat. gr. 2574-I*.

Both units are from the same hand, on the same paper, and they both contain works from the same author. On the one hand, this manuscript can be seen as some kind of diptych, whose first part is addressed against the Saracens, while the second part is against the Jews. In this case, it is a half book against the Jews. On the other hand, there is a strong discontinuity before f. 186, and at least two manuscripts of the *Adversus Iudaeos orationes ix*, copied from the same scribe, but without the *adversus Saracenos* texts, are preserved.⁴⁴ Thus one cannot exclude the option that both parts were originally produced independently and then quickly joined together.

⁴³ Uncatalogued manuscript. RGK 3, Nr 419.—Description in *Les livres manuscrits*, op. cit. n. 2, where the two units are presented as two possible independent production units.

⁴⁴ These are Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 685 and Leiden, B. Rijks., BPG 46.—See now *Les livres manuscrits*, op. cit. n. 2.—On Manuel Tzykandylis B. Mondrain, “L’ancien empereur Jean VI Cantacuzène et ses copistes,” in *Gregorio Palamas e oltre. Studi e documenti sulle controversie teologiche del XIV secolo bizantino*, ed., A. Rigo, *Orientalia Venetiana* 16 (Firenze, 2004): 249–96, spec. pp. 250–60.

C.3 *Hagion Oros, Lavra, Cod. Γ 107*—“Full book” or “quasi full book” with one text?

Like *Coisl.* 255 mentioned above (see p. 569), *Lavra, Cod. Γ 107*⁴⁵ (Lauriotes, 347), copied in the thirteenth or the fourteenth century, contains an abridged version of the *Vita Gregentii*: 116 out of its 144 pages (80%) are taken up by the polemical *Disputatio cum Herbano Iudaeo*, CPG 7009. However, as explained above about *Coisl.* 255, it could also be interpreted as a “full book.” One notices that “quasi full books” are uncommon in the third period and no potential “quasi full books” with several texts have been found so far.

C.4 *Vaticanus gr. 719*—Multi-textual “full book”

*Vat. gr. 719*⁴⁶ exemplifies the very uncommon type of a multi-textual *contra Iudaeos* “full book”:

Even though the table of contents of the manuscript, from the hand of the first scribe, mentions the texts against the Jews in Unit B and C, there is a major discontinuity between Unit A and B: not only the topic and the hand change but also in both PUs the quire numbers start at 1. The paper also changes and, in the second PU, it appears to be slightly older than in the first one. As a result, one can easily conclude that the second unit used to circulate independently, until someone added to it the current first unit.

The differences between Unit B and C are much smaller: they have a common hand and the paper is very similar. It is not certain if they were produced independently, and it is very probable that they circulated together before Unit A was joined to them.

At first sight, this mid-fourteenth century *contra Iudaeos* collection book recalls *Coisl.* 299 (see above p. 564), as far as both manuscripts contain a series of relevant polemical texts. However, contrary to *Coisl.* 299, three books in *Vat. gr. 719* (A, B, and A+B) are entirely dedicated to *contra Iudaeos* polemics. Besides, the texts and their nature differ widely. In particular, in the *Vaticanus* there is no single long text. All of them are either a series of rather short texts (see John Chrysostomus;

⁴⁵ Manuscript known through secondary literature only.—Cat. Lauriotes, *Eustratiades* RO 1135: 47; Berger, spec. p. 142 (ms. A); Ehrhard, t. 3: 953 n. 2.

⁴⁶ Cat. Devreesse, RO 832: 216–7; Voicu, CCSG 6: 125; P. Canart, “Un copiste expansif: Jean Sévère de Lacédémone,” in *Studia Codicologica*, ed., K. Treu, TU 124 (1977): 128–39, spec. p. 132; Déroche, “L’Apologie,” op. cit. n. 23, *passim* spec. p. 50 (ms. A); S. N. Sakkos, *Περὶ Ἀναστασιῶν Συναΐτων* (Thessaloniki, 1964), 195, 252; Schiano, “Dal dialogo,” op. cit. n. 40: 125–9.—New description in *Les livres manuscrits*, op. cit. n. 2.

Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 719

A. (f. 2–86^c) supplementing unit—*Adversus Saracenos*

S. XIV^{3/3}.—Paper: watermarks “Huchet”, “Cercle double”.—Hand a.

1. (f. 2r–86r sup.) Riccoldo Da Montecroce, *Contra legem Saracenorum*.
- (f. 86r inf.–86^v) empty.

B. (f. 86^d–235^b) first older unit—*Adversus Iudaeos*

S. XIV^{2/3}.—Paper: watermarks “Trois fruits”.—Hand c and d.

- (f. 86drv) empty.
- 2.1. (f. 87r–193v sup.) Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Adversus Iudaeos orationes* (orat. 1, 4–8).
- (f. 193v inf.) empty.
- 2.2. (f. 194r–221r sup.) Euthymius Zigabenus, *Panoplia dogmatica* (titulus viii).
- 2.3. (f. 221r inf.–232r sup.) *Anonyma testimonia* “ὅτι τρισυπόστατός ἐστιν ἡ μία θεότης (that the one divinity is threehypostatic).”
- 2.4. (f. 232r inf.–235v) Glycas Michael, *In difficultates s. Scripturae* (cap. 17).
- (f. 235^ar–235^bv) empty.

C. (f. 236–290; 291–298) second older unit—*Adversus Iudaeos*

S. XIV^{2/3}.—Paper: watermarks “Trois fruits”, very similar to the paper in Unit B.

Working unit 1.—Hand e

- 2.5a. (f. 236r–290v) *Disputatio Anastasii adversus Iudaeos*, CPG 7772, first part.

Working unit 2.—Hand d

- 2.5b. (f. 291r–295r) *Disputatio Anastasii adversus Iudaeos*, CPG 7772, second part.
- (f. 295v–298v) empty.

Fig. 9: “Skeleton” of Vat. gr. 719.

Ps. Anastasius) or excerpts (see the patristic excerpts in Zigabenus and the biblical excerpts in the anonymous testimonies); the remaining text itself is an excerpt from the answers of Glycas.

C.5 Monographs

Another type of “full book” is what is called today the monograph: a book with only one work in it. Some possibly older monographs were discussed above (see p. 572), but this type is frequent in the third period.

Some of these monographs still take up a full volume today, for example,

- *Vindob. theol. gr.* 118:⁴⁷ the 138 folios with text, from the fourteenth century, are taken up by the *Dialogus contra Iudaeos* of Andronicus Comnenus.

Some currently mutilated book could have been monographs, for example:

- *Paris. gr.* 1255:⁴⁸ the main unit dates from the fourteenth century and was copied in the region of Otranto. Its 101 folios contain the only known witness to the *Dialogue* of Nicolas of Otranto. The end of the text, which used to be on the mutilated part of the original manuscript, is now lost. The manuscript bears witness that someone in Otranto during the fourteenth century was interested in producing a book containing one long *contra Iudaeos* text.

Vat. gr. 372,⁴⁹ in several PUs, is more difficult to evaluate:

⁴⁷ Manuscript known through secondary literature only.—Cat. Hunger, RO 2445: 53–5; E. Voordeckers, “Les juifs et l’empire byzantin au 14^e siècle,” in *Actes du 14^e congrès international des études byzantines*, Vol. 2 (Bucarest, 1975), 285–290, see p. 288 n. 30 (wrongly named 255).

⁴⁸ Cat. Omont, RO 192: 277. Amongst an abundant literature: R. Devreesse, *Les manuscrits grecs de l’Italie méridionale*, Studi e Testi 183 (1955): 47; Halkin, *Manuscrits grecs*, op. cit. n. 19: 151; J.-M. Hoek and R. Loenertz, “Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto Abt von Casole. Beiträge zur Geschichte der ost-westlichen Beziehungen unter Innozenz III. und Friedrich II.,” *Studia Patristica et Byzantina* 11 (1965): 82–3, n. 67.

⁴⁹ Cat. Devreesse, RO 831: 62–5. Amongst an abundant literature: S. Lilla, “Zur neuen kritischen Ausgabe der Schrift “Über die göttlichen Namen” von Ps. Dionysius Aeropagita,” *Augustinianum* 31 (1991): 421–58, *passim* spec. p. 297, 341–354, Nr. 18, ms. V5; I. D. Polemis, “Theophanes of Nicea: His Life and Works,” *Wiener Byzantinistische Studien* 20 (1996): 37–8. This manuscript is too often mistaken with *Barb. gr.* 372, the “Barberini Psalter.”—New description in *Les livres manuscrits*, op. cit. n. 2.

Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 372

A. (f. I, 1–5)

S. XIV.—Paper.—Hand b, c.

– (f. Irv) originally empty.—Today with a table of contents.

1a–c (f. 1r–5v sup.) <Maximus Confessor>, *Prolog to Ps. Dionysius*.

– (f. 5v inf.) originally empty.

B. (f. 6–124)

S. XIV.—Paper.—Hand a.

1.1–2a. (f. 6r–124v) Ps. Dionysius Areopagita, *De coelesti hierarchia, De divinis nominibus* (1st part).

C. (f. 125–223)

S. XIV.—Paper.—Hand b.

1.2b–5. (f. 125r–223v) Idem, *De divinis nominibus* (2nd part), *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, etc.; see catalogue.

D. (f. 224–439) *adversus Iudaeos*

S. XIV.—Paper.—Hand c.

2. (f. 224r–439r) Theophanes Nicaenus, *Contra Iudaeos*.

– (f. 439v) originally empty.

Fig. 10: “Skeleton” of Vat. gr. 372.

On one hand, there is a major discontinuity after f. 223: both the text and the hand change and the numbering of the quires starts at “1” again. One is tempted to infer the last PU used to circulate independently from the first ones and thus used to be a monograph with 432 pages. On the other hand, all the PUs date from the fourteenth century and hand c, who copied Unit D, also wrote some lines of the prologue and some commentary on Units A and C. Thus, one could also argue that all the units were produced together and that the quire was renumbered from “1” in order to treat each unit autonomously. It is not impossible, even though there is no clear “textual coherence” between Unit D and the previous units. So, a third possibility is that Units A–C on the one hand,⁵⁰ and Unit D on the other hand, were produced separately with no pre-conceived idea as to whether they should be joined or not.

Monographs must be evaluated cautiously, because unless the original binding has been preserved, one cannot be certain whether some

⁵⁰ The changes in handwriting within Units A–C are easily accounted for if Unit A and C were produced to complete an already existing Unit B.

written folios were once located before or—even more possibly—after today's preserved ones.

C.6 *Modena, B. Estense, α.P.6.11—Possible one quire end unit*

As explained above (cf. p. 555), small PUs, mostly consisting of one quire, are sometimes found at the end of an ancient book (thus not necessarily at the end of a modern volume). They are uncommon in the third period but much more frequent in the sixteenth century. *Mutinensis* α.P.6.11⁵¹ illustrates this type.

Modena, B. Estense, α.P.6.11
(olim III.C.11; Puntoni, 90)

Extra elements: (f. 1)—S. XIII or XIV.—Bound to f. 8.

A. (f. 2–96) main unit
S. XI.—Parchment.

1. (f. 2r–43r) Gregorius Aneponymus, *Compendium philosophiae et quadrivium*.
2. (f. 44v–96v) <Michael Psellos>, *Liber de quatuor mathematicis scientiis*.

B. (f. 97–104; 105–109) possible supplementing unit
S. XIV.—Paper.

- Working unit 1
3. (f. 97r–104v) <Iamblichus >, *Theologoumena arithmeticae*.

- Working unit 2
4. (f. 105r–109v) <Michael Psellos>, *Scholia de psychogonia Platonis*.

C. (f. 110–114) polemical booklet
S. XIV/XV.—Paper.

5. (f. 110r–114r) Athanasius Alexandrinus, *Quaestio ad Antiochum ducem* 137, CPG 7795.
- (f. 114v) originally empty.

Fig. 11: “Skeleton” of Mutin. α.P.6.11.

⁵¹ Cat. Puntoni, RO 1714: 444–5; V. de Falco, [*Iamblichus*] *Theologoumena arithmeticae*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig, 1922), nov. ed. U. Klein (Stuttgart, 1975), ix–x.

Was Unit C ever an independent book? This is a question one always faces with this kind of small end units. On the one hand, one might argue that they are too small to be bound independently, and as a result, they were most probably copied in order to be added to existing books as “supplementing units.” On the other hand, why could they not exist or circulate unbound, or inside a temporary protection sheet? Another question about this specific example has to do with its final mutilation, so that one wonders whether or not another text began on the lost leaves and continued on extra quires.

C.7 “Minor topic” material

Examples of minor clusters:

- The third PU (f. 198–297) of *Ambros. M 88 sup.* (gr. 534)⁵² dates from the thirteenth century. Only 17 of its 200 pages contain relevant data, with 3 texts: a. (f. 239r–245r sup.) *Doctrina Iacobi nuper baptizati*, CPG 7793. b–c. (f. 245v inf.–247r sup.) *Formulae duo de abiuratione Iudaeorum*.
- *Palat. gr. 233*⁵³ is a one-unit manuscript mainly about laws and heresies. A section deals with the Jews: a. (f. 102r–106v) *Formulae de receptione Iudaeorum*. b. (f. 106v–115v) Gregorius Abestas, metr. Nicaenus, *De baptismo Iudaeis*. c. (f. 115v–131v sup.) *Eclogae Veteris Testamenti de sancta Trinitate et de incarnatione*; see above. The first two texts are often found together, for example in the *Synod. gr. 443* (Vladimir, 232)⁵⁴ or the *Coisl.* 213,⁵⁵ f. 145v inf.–164v sup.; in the *Palatinus*, the addition of the *Eclogae* is noticeable (see also above p. 559, about the Lambeth palace, Sion Arc.L.40.2\G 6).
- *Vat. gr. 2220*⁵⁶ illustrates a difficult situation to evaluate, with a weak cluster of three partially contiguous texts, copied at least by two different hands: a. (f. 98r–102r sup.) *De receptione Iudaeorum*. b. (f. 106r inf.–v sup.) Leontius Neapolitanus, *Contra Iudaeos ora-*

⁵² Cat. Martini, Bassi, RO 1694: 645–651; Pasini, *Inventario*, op. cit. n. 22:136–7; G. Hansen, *Anonyme Kirchengeschichte (Gelasius Cyzicenus, CPG 6034)*, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten drei Jahrhunderte N. F. 9 (Berlin, 2002): xvi–xviii.—Further bibliographical references in Pasini, *Bibliografia*, op. cit. n. 22: 286.

⁵³ Cat. Stevenson, RO 817: 126; Burgmann et al., *Repertorium*, op. cit. n. 38: 295–7.—See now *Les livres manuscrits*, op. cit. n. 2.

⁵⁴ Cat. Vladimir, RO 1736: 301–4; Fonkič, RO 1737: 84.

⁵⁵ Cat. Devreesse, RO 1907: 194–5.

⁵⁶ Cat. Lilla, RO 838: 224–257; Turyn, *Codices Graeci*, op. cit. n. 15: 104–7, Tab. 77–84.—New description in *Les livres manuscrits*, op. cit. n. 2.

tiones 1–5, CPG 7885. c. (f. 107r–125v) *Eclogae Veteris Testamenti de sancta Trinitate et de incarnatione*.

The following example of twin manuscripts illustrate that material *contra Iudaeos* in corpora can be very extensive.⁵⁷ At the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century, the two codices Wien, ÖNB, Theol. gr. 306–307 used to be one codex: its series of 15 *contra Iudaeos* texts, spread on 217 pages, but only amount to about 30% of the whole original manuscript. The same collection is found in the Torino, BNU, gr. B.iv.22 (Pasini, 200; Cosentini, 185; *olim* b.III.11), dated to the thirteenth century.

Finally, as explained above (see n. 9), liturgical manuscripts are not mentioned unless they contain an unusual amount of polemical material. Such could be the case of *Marc. gr. VII, 31* (coll. 1018; see f. 235v–264v sup.),⁵⁸ where most of the homilies for the holy week are strongly polemical. Even though many of them do not present themselves as *contra Iudaeos*, they contain such an unusually high amount of hostile or polemical statements, that they can reasonably be considered as such. How should such a manuscript be classified? On the one hand, identifying a liturgical manuscript as particularly anti-Jewish is a lot of work and it is a very subjective decision, too. On the other hand, it would not be satisfactory either to *a priori* exclude all the liturgical manuscripts from a general study of the *contra Iudaos* books, though the main purpose for these manuscripts is to give the priests readings for the services in Church. Further studies should help solve this dilemma. In the case of *Marc. gr. VII, 31*, the identified polemical material does not seem to take up a substantial part of the manuscript, which thus cannot be kept among our researched books.

⁵⁷ Cat. Hunger, Lackner, RO 2446: 373–89; Pasini, Rivautella, Berta, RO 2318: 297–301; P. Eleuteri and A. Rigo, *Eretici, Dissidenti, Musulmani ed Ebrei a Bisanzio—Una raccolta eresiologicala del XII secolo*, Ricerche—Collana della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'università di Venezia (Venezia, 1993), 81–106.

⁵⁸ Cat. Mioni, RO 2336: 54–8; H. Delehayé, “Catalogus Codicum Hagiographico-rum Bibliothecae D. Marci Venetiarum,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 24 (1905): 169–256, spec. pp. 231–3; Ehrhard, t. 2, pp. 53–4, “Jahrespanegyrik.”

C.8 *Remarks about the third period*

Although only a part of the known material has been presented above, the surveyed examples are sufficient to illustrate what seems to be a major evolution between the second and the third period: from the thirteenth century, the *contra Iudaeos* monographs were used extensively, largely replacing the “quasi full books” type, while in the previous periods, only some rare manuscripts have been identified as potentially monographs. Even if many manuscripts are today lost and all the extant ones have not been assessed so far, the change is striking and calls for an explanation. One might explore some possible ones.

Firstly, it does not seem to have anything to do with the format of the manuscript. Not all of the monographs are small pocket books. For example, the size of the above-mentioned *Vindob. theol. gr.* 118 (from the third period, see p. 577) is not far from a standard European A4 format, and its dialogue of Andronicus Comnenus takes up 138 leaves. Again, in *Paris. gr.* 1255 (from the second period) the dialogue of Nectarius takes up 101 leaves, exactly the same number of leaves occupied by the *Dialogue of Timothy's and Aquila* in *Sinait. gr.* 399 from the second period... which is not a monograph!

Secondly, does it have something to do with the spread of paper starting in the thirteenth century? One does not see what kind of direct relationship there could be between the material and the extension of the texts in the books. There are smaller and larger books on parchment, as there are smaller and larger books on paper, too. Indirectly though, it may have played a part, as is mentioned below.

Even more so, it is striking that the long texts found in monographs from the third period are mostly not the same as the long texts in the previous periods. For example, the seven manuscripts of the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* from the first two periods include all the witnesses to the longer version of it. From the third period, there are only two witnesses to this text and they carry the shorter version of the text. On the other hand, most of the long texts copied in the third period (like the works of Nectarios, Andronicus Comnenus, John Cantacuzenus, or Theophanes of Nicaea) were also composed during the third period. How should one then interpret that a long text like the *Disputatio Gregentii* is copied in both the second and the third period? Its continued circulation probably has to do with the fact that it is hagiography and that the saint was honored in both periods.

In reality, many of the *contra Iudaeos* texts composed in the third period are long texts. Why is this so? The interest of the Byzantine

people in religious debates and the high level of literacy in some stratum of society is of course at the core of the answer. But maybe something also changed in their relationship with the Jews in general and in their need to refute Judaism. One also wonders whether the spread of paper as a less expensive and more available writing material did not also make it technically easier to compose and copy so many new long texts in the thirteenth and fourteenth century.

Between the second and the third period something clearly changed in the type of texts the Byzantine people were interested in, both in composing and copying. How does this modification relate to the noted evolution of the books? Of course, it makes sense that the chances of finding a monograph are greater when there are more long texts in circulation. But again, this explanation is not fully satisfactory, because long texts existed in the previous periods too and they were not usually copied as monographs. A more convincing explanation is that the way Byzantine people perceived the books was also modified. By the fourteenth century, the idea of "one work, one book" was now largely seen as one of several possible methods for conveying *contra Iudaeos* texts. These changes necessarily need to be put in relation to the broader evolution of Byzantine society at the time and the fluctuating relationship between Jews and Christians. But it still remains to be better studied.

CONCLUSION

The above short survey leads toward four cautious conclusions:

Firstly, the production of *contra Iudaeos* manuscript books in Byzantine cultural areas was a reality and was not restricted to Constantinople; this was a broad, complex, and evolving reality.

Secondly, these books clearly did not represent a major part of what was "published." From the current state of our database, one might extrapolate that the amount of preserved books produced before the end of the sixteenth century could rise a little above 160 volumes; about half of them would be from the Byzantine period. Besides, some of these volumes are on the borderline of one's definition of this book category. This is not much; statistics about *contra Latinos* books would turn up much higher figures, as anyone reading catalogues of Greek manuscripts knows.

Thirdly, as far as the history of the books is concerned, the emergence of the monograph in the thirteenth century as a major *contra*

Iudaeos book type is probably a witness to evolutions in both text and book production and, even more generally, to changes in Byzantine culture. More about this evolution could be learned from a comparative study with other types of religious polemical literature: does one find the same trends in the polemics against the Roman Church? When were the oldest monographs against the Saracens produced?

Fourthly, in several *contra Iudaeos* books, polemics against the Jews are found incidentally next to polemics against the Saracens (for example in *Vat. gr.* 719, see above) or against the Monophysites (for example in *Coisl.* 299, see above), but never with polemics against the Latins. Is it a distorted image due to the limited amount of studied manuscripts, or does it point to some kind of common perception of these religious groups in Byzantine culture?

Finally, as stated, the current paper does not address the question of the “where” and “why” these books were produced. Even though those are major questions, one should bear in mind that even in well-documented cases, it is often not possible to precisely recover the context of the production of these books. As a result, it is also difficult to precisely find the reasons why they were produced. However, even if some reasonable answers are to be found for some manuscripts, it would be a methodological mistake to generalize these answers and apply them to the other manuscripts: what is true for one of them is not necessarily true for another. In the same place and time, some of these books could hypothetically have been copied with the idea of being used in real debates, while others could have been dogmatic exercises, or just one piece in a much broader collection of works against all the heresies—no matter whether there were any Jews in the place where they were produced.

A careful analysis of the manuscripts yielded unexpected results and many new questions, in a little explored area of Byzantine culture. May further researches provide yet more unexpected results, including some answers!

APPENDIX: REFERENCED MANUSCRIPTS

- Città del Vaticano, BAV, Barb. gr. 372
- Città del Vaticano, BAV, Ottob. gr. 414
- Città del Vaticano, BAV, Palat. gr. 233
- Città del Vaticano, BAV, Reg. gr. Pii II 47
- 5 Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 372

- Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 577
 Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 685
 Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 719
 Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 770
¹⁰ Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 2049
 Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 2121
 Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 2220
 Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 2574–I
 Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 2658
¹⁵ Firenze, B. Medicea Laurenziana, plut. 9.14
 Grottaf., Badia gr., Crypt. A.δ.vi
 Hagion Oros, M. Meg. Lavra, Cod. Γ 107 (Lauriotes, 347)
 Hagion Oros, M. Vatopedi, Cod. 555
 Leiden, B. Rijks., BPG 46
²⁰ London, Lambeth palace, Sion Arc.L.40.2\G6 (Schenkl, 4480)
 Milano, BN. Ambros., Cod. C 135 inf. (gr. 862)
 Milano, BN. Ambros., Cod. H 257 inf. (gr. 1041)
 Milano, BN. Ambros., Cod. M 88 sup. (gr. 534)
 Modena, B. Estense, Cod. α.P.6.11 (Puntoni, 90)
²⁵ Moskva, GIM, Synod. gr. 265 (Vladimir, 197; Matthaei, 252)
 Moskva, GIM, Synod. gr. 394 (Vladimir, 231)
 Moskva, GIM, Synod. gr. 443 (Vladimir, 232)
 Paris, BnF, Coisl. 111
 Paris, BnF, Coisl. 213
³⁰ Paris, BnF, Coisl. 255
 Paris, BnF, Coisl. 299
 Paris, BnF, Gr. 924
 Paris, BnF, Gr. 1084
 Paris, BnF, Gr. 1115
³⁵ Paris, BnF, Gr. 1255
 Sināi, M. hag. Aikat., Gr. 399
 Torino, BNU, Gr. B.iv.22 (Pasini, 200; Cosentini, 185; *olim* b.III.11)
 Venezia, BN Marciana, Gr. VII, 31 (coll. 1018)
 Venezia, BN Marciana, Gr. Z. 105 (coll. 376)
⁴⁰ Venezia, BN Marciana, Gr. Z. 106 (coll. 429)
 Venezia, BN Marciana, Gr. Z. 107 (coll. 572)
 Venezia, BN Marciana, Gr. Z. 521 (coll. 316)
 Wien, ÖNB, Theol. gr. 118 (Lambeck, 339)
 Wien, ÖNB, Theol. gr. 306 (Lambeck, 247)
⁴⁵ Wien, ÖNB, Theol. gr. 307 (Lambeck, 248)

THE JUDAIZING CHRISTIANS OF BYZANTIUM: AN OBJECTIONABLE FORM OF SPIRITUALITY

Philippe Gardette

The subject of Christians attracted by Judaism and integrating elements of the Mosaic religion into their practices or hermeneutics remains to be studied systematically. If antiquity contains numerous examples of these Judaizing Christians, the establishment of Christianity over the Eastern Roman Empire does not signal their demise. On the contrary, their survival is attested to by the writings of Eastern theologians. The most astonishing fact remains, however, their sporadic reappearances throughout the history of the Byzantine Empire, until the fourteenth century.

The purpose of this short chapter will thus be to emphasize this question, in particular by presenting the available but often fragmentary sources, themselves borrowed from theological *topoi*, which renders difficult any analysis of the specifics of these sects. Nevertheless, a joint effort remains to be completed and we propose only an introduction to a study which will be all the more enticing as its challenges are multiple and fundamental. For example, the Judaizing Christians force us to question the relations between Christians and Jews in the history of the Byzantine Empire, and the image of the Jews in Orthodox Christian writings. To obtain a complete picture of the subject it will be necessary to check information given by Christian and Jewish sources. In addition, the resurgence of Judaizing movements occurs at key moments in Byzantine history and the central investigation thus relates to the significance of the revival of these sects. Finally, they developed in Anatolia, a geographic area which is traditionally considered in Byzantine theology as a nest of heresy.

Anatolia contains a profound paradox: it is the land of the first Christians and the birthplace of numerous fathers of the Church, but it develops as well a different culture which renders it more eastern and therefore fundamentally dangerous, according to European Byzantine civilization. A land of passage, assimilation, and syncretism, Anatolia preserves within itself traces of different cultures which were more or less implanted and synthesized at the same time. Finally,

when Islam arrived, its empire acquired the status of a frontier zone relatively ignored by the central authority because it was judged as being stained with heretical values; a new faith, treated with mistrust and speculation.

It is in this syncretic context that the different Judaizing sects developed. But is the interest of orthodox Christians, whose religion is firmly *vétéretestamentary*, to integrate the elements of Judaism in their systems and thereby prompt a break with orthodoxy? My goal will be to propose the outline of a response.

I. JUDAIZING CHRISTIANS LONG IMPLANTED IN ANATOLIA

We find Judaizing movements in Anatolia in the fifth century. They were baptized Hyspistarians by Christian authors and they specifically spurned the dogma of the Trinity;¹ they survived in Cappadocia until the ninth century.² Similarly, in the second half of the sixth century, a sect of Christian origin is found called Melchizedekians because its adherents considered Melchizedek above Christ and assimilated him into God the Father. The specifics of these heterodox believers were that they kept the Sabbath—but not circumcision—and they practiced magic. Later, Timothy of Constantinople would assimilate the Athinganoi into this heresy.³ Finally, a homely of Photius described the sect of the Quatuordecimans. Benefiting from their presence at the religious services of Holy Saturday in the year 867, the author berated these Christians as frozen in the dogma and the discipline of the old Church which accepted Jewish customs, recognized apocryphal books, apparently no longer had bishops, professed “new opinions,” and distinguished themselves by other aberrations which the author does not take the trouble to describe.⁴

Still, the story of the Athinganoi is particularly informative for our study because the sources devoted to it, deeply critical, since they were

¹ Cf. G. Stokes, *Dictionary of Christian Biography* 3 (1882), 188–9 and W. Calder, “Epigraphy of Anatolian Heresy,” *Anatolian Studies Presented to Sir William Mitchell Ramsay* (Manchester, 1923), 88–9.

² Cf. A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London, 1971), 73.

³ Cf. J. Starr, “An Eastern Christian Sect: The Athinganoi,” *Harvard Theological Review* XXIX 2 (1936): 93–106.

⁴ Cf. C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius* (Cambridge, 1958), 288–9.

written by orthodox Christians, are relatively numerous. In fact, the first texts concerning this heresy refer to the activities of an emperor, Nicephorus I, and more particularly, the first mention of this sect is found in the chronicle of Theophanus in the ninth century. Alongside another heresy, the Paulicians of Phrygia⁵ and of Laconia, the Athinganoi are described as the most reliable aides of Nicephorus I (802–811), the general of the army in Asia Minor.

This future emperor is a native of this region and the Byzantine chroniclers condemn the faith which the emperor places in heretics accused of practicing magic.⁶ Still, in spite of his critics, Theophanus describes Nicephorus I as a tolerant but profoundly idol worshipping sovereign. Was he really a crypto heretic and did he encourage this heresy? Nothing is less certain.⁷ Meanwhile, we find in this example all of the cultural opposition which separates the European part of the Empire from Byzantine Anatolia. In effect, the sources say that the origin of iconoclastic thought occurs in Phrygia, and that traditionally, the emperors from this part of the world reject idolatry. For example, Leon V (813–820), who fought against idolatry, came from Asia, which leads us to understand a cultural sensibility of the Asiatic part of the Empire quite different from that of Europe. Succeeding Leon V, Michael II, whose origins are Anatolian, had to face an armed revolt organized by a coreligionist and former brother-in-arms, Thomas the Slave.⁸ Yet, this taking up of arms applies essentially to the lower classes of Anatolian society where the slave minority is important because of numerous population transfers; Theophanus did not develop this *topos*. For the author, in an Anatolian world where the monophysites are numerous, where the population is composite, where the major portion of the inhabitants differ with the European culture which was imposed on them, which is the locale of the appearance of numerous sects and heresies with eastern sensibilities, Anatolia

⁵ Phrygia is the locale *par excellence* of the birth of heresies; cf. M. Balivet, "Regional Permanencies in Ancient Anatolian Heresiology among the Ottomans," in id., *Byzantine, Seljuk and Ottoman Mixtures* (Istanbul 2005), 7–19.

⁶ Cf. Theophanus, *Chronographia*, ed., K. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), 488, A. M. 6303. Cf. as well, Kendrenos (twelfth century), *Synopsis historion*, in P.G., CXXI, 924; Zonaras, *Epitomé historion*, III (Bonn, 1897), 308. The latter shows specifically that the epithet of Theophanus 'manichean' is not applicable to the Athinganoi.

⁷ Cf. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire I* (Paris, 1932), 373.

⁸ On these questions, cf. G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Paris, 1993), 216–40.

remains a source of danger as much for its imperial power as for its orthodoxy.

The image of Anatolian culture is thus, above all, iconoclastic and pagan. Moreover, if one takes into account orthodox Christian theological writings affirming that iconoclasm—as well as Islam—were influenced by Judaism, the notion of Judaizing applied to heresies must be viewed in relation to the iconoclastic crisis.⁹ Judaizing is in one sense linked to the attitude of refusing every icon, as well as rejecting official spirituality. As for the practice of magic by the votaries, we are certainly faced with the *topos* that links heterodoxy to the devil, where cultural practice is associated with the purposefulness of magic. In any case, it is equally possible that the Paulicians and the Athinganoi integrated in their cults cultural elements and pagan cultures drawn from antiquity and from the various ethnicities populating Anatolia. In this case, this stereotype returns to a reality whose contours remain difficult to determine precisely.

The situation is different under the brief reign of Michael I, who resumed and pursued Leon III's severe legislation directed towards battling the sects and Judaism. This radicalism is the result of the influence of the Patriarch Nicephorus who, affected by the increasing insolvency of the Paulicians and Athinganoi heretics in the capital, issued a request to the emperor demanding the eradication of all the Phrygia-Laonic heresies. To press his demand, Nicephorus edited a report against the Jews, the Manicheans, and the Phrygians, emphasizing their iconoclastic beliefs. Under the influence of Nicephorus, the emperor issued a death sentence against the Paulicians and Athinganoi.¹⁰ Nevertheless, this extreme measure far from gladdened the majority of the orthodox clergy,¹¹ particularly Theodore Studite.¹² Finally, influenced by the moderate party, the sentence was commuted to banishment and confiscation of assets. The execution of this order was entrusted to Leo, a general with an Anatolian bent,¹³ commanded to transfer the Paulicians and Athinganoi west of the Anatolian territory. So, this

⁹ Cf. A. Ducellier, *Eastern Christians and Islam in the Middle Ages, VIIth–XVth Centuries* (Paris, 1996), 33–4.

¹⁰ Cf. Theophanus, *Chronographia*, 494ff.

¹¹ Cf. E. Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Movement* (London, 1932), 152.

¹² Cf. A. Dubroklonski, *Prep. Theodor ispovyednik I igumen Studiiskii I* (1914), 715 in reference to P.G., XCIX, 1485.

¹³ Cf. Theophanus, *Chronographia*, 497.

policy did not bring about the expected results, and far from disappearing, the two heresies continued to attract new faithful.

According to the chronicle of Genesisios, the Athinganoi are very present in the city Amorion, birthplace of Michael II (emperor from 820–829), since a prophet of this sect predicted the future emperor Michael II's ascension to the throne at a time when he was only an obscure officer. However, while certain late sources affirm that Michael II was elevated by some members of the sect, this theory is unacceptable: neither the text of Genesisios, nor that of George the Monk, his quasi-contemporary, contain any elements on the participation of Michael II in this sect.¹⁴ Furthermore, once emperor, Michael II favored iconoclasm, but some studies have also shown that he did not persecute his adversaries in a systematic manner.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the iconoclastic sensibility of the emperor sufficed for the later chroniclers to present him in a less flattering light by applying certain details provided by Genesisios who made the Athinganoi into Judaizers.¹⁶

Moreover, the continuation of Theophanus's chronicle presents the emperor as an Athingan by birth and education. While Genesisios sees no reason to expand on the idiosyncrasy of the sect, the Pseudo-Theophanus describes it by insisting on its heterodox character. The Athinganoi, he explains, are clearly Judaizers. According to him, the heresy is the product of too limited relations between the Christians of Anatolia, who are inclined to iconoclasm, and the important Jewish community.¹⁷ The result of such a meeting is a Christianity which Judaizes its religious practices. The signs of the influence of Judaism on the Athinganoi are the following: each family takes for itself a Jew or Jewess as a teacher, who lives with the members of the family and is involved with its spiritual and temporal affairs.

The consequences of this bond—deemed to be unnatural—are that the members of this sect:

¹⁴ Cf. Genesisios, *Basileiai*, P.G. CIX, 1025–8; Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, (London, 1912), 79ff., on the passage concerning the continuation of Theophanus, P.G., CIX, pp. 57–9, 65. Cf. also Kedrenos, *Synopsis historion*, P.G., CXXI, 953–6, and Zonaras, *Epitomé historion* III (Bonn 1897), 337ff.

¹⁵ Cf. Dobronklonski, *op. cit.*, 849 and Vasiliev A., *op. cit.*, 376.

¹⁶ Cf. *Loc. cit.*, 1072ff.

¹⁷ Cf. *Loc. cit.*, 56. Singularly, Bury, *op. cit.*, 78 and E. Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Movement* (London, 1932), 199, interprets the sect which interests us as a third group between the Jews and the Athinganoi.

- observe Mosaic law;
- abstain from circumcision;
- but practice Christian baptism.

Moreover, does the education received by Michael II not explain why the emperor is an iconoclast? Why he loves the Jews more than the Christians? And why he declared a tax exemption for the Jews?¹⁸ The image of the Emperor Michael II was perpetuated in Byzantine history. For example, in the twelfth century, the chronicle of Zonaras summarizes the personality of Michael II by the phrase "he belonged to the Jews."¹⁹ Finally, at the end of the century, Michael the Syrian forces the issue to the point of giving the emperor a Jewish grandfather!²⁰

In parallel, the emperor decreed that the Sabbath must be observed, the Resurrection doubted, the existence of the devil denied by applying the idea that Moses had said nothing about it, to swear only by God, who is the basis of all, whereas, according to him, Judas figured among the fortunate. These elements tend to demonstrate the Jewish sympathies of the emperor. Still, other arguments trouble this hypothesis: Michael II disparaged the prophets and Passover, the culture within his group, whether Christian or pagan, to the point of forbidding the education of children: the stammering unlettered sovereign not able to understand that he was being surpassed by practically anyone in speech and in reading.²¹ These accusations are paradoxical since, if one considers them a global attack against Judaism, they appear on a new day. As well, the emperor's rejection of certain aspects of Jewish culture simply proves his incapability to accept the text announcing Christ, and more generally, his rejection of culture, profane or sacred.

Another characteristic of the Athinganoi was their devotion to magic practices based on asceticism and withdrawal from the world. Since Germain of Constantinople, Athinganoi and Samaritans²² have

¹⁸ Cf. Loc. cit., 61. Cf. this remark explained by F. Dölger, "Die Frage des Judensteuer in Byzanz," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* XXVI (1933): 11.

¹⁹ Cf. 339. Figuratively and literally, the orthodox writers stage the Jews at the origin of the iconoclastic crisis Cf. Martin, op. cit., 24 et J. Starr, "An Iconodulic Legend and Its Historical Basis," *Speculum* 8 (1933): 501-3.

²⁰ *Makhtebhanuth zabnhne* (Chronicle), editing and translation J. Chabot (Paris, 1899-1924), IV, 522; trans. III, 72.

²¹ Cf. Theophanus, *Chronographia*, 61-4.

²² The term Samaritan relates to the face of Simon the magus, a personality in the *Acts of the Apostles*, who came from Samaria.

the common trait of isolationism, whence the name of Athingan: "he who does not touch."²³ In the eleventh century, Euthymus of Peribleptos used the synonym of catharsis. In addition, the Byzantine authors established a direct rapport between cenobitic asceticism and occult practices. This relationship suggests that asceticism, seeking contemplation and the mysteries of God, is also able to discover paths that influence reality. Here we are directly confronted by the recurrent problem of orthodox religion which does not know how to integrate a cenobitic tradition carrying within itself the germ of heterodoxy.²⁴

To these accusations one must add that of the Sabbateans. In effect, according to the biographer of the Patriarch Ignatius, the Emperor Michael II was the issue of a Sebastian family of Amorion, in Phrygia.²⁵ In parallel, the continuation of Theophanus's chronicle is formal: the natal sect of Michael II retains from Christianity only baptism and preserves all of Judaism, except circumcision. Meanwhile, when getting into the details, it is the Samaritans whom the author describes: Michael II accepts only the Pentateuch, rejects the prophets, denies the resurrection and the existence of the devil, and the only trait in common with the Sabbateans remains that the emperor accepts the Jewish calculation of Easter. Finally, this obsession with the Sabbateans is found again in an episode in which Leon V decides to restore iconoclasm to the councils of Symbatios, or Sabbatios,²⁶ a Phrygian hermit²⁷ residing in Constantinople. In fact, a text titled *Extract from a dialogue with the recluse Moschos*²⁸ opposes a devotion to idols with a dissident who accepts the Eucharist, venerates the books of the evangelists, but professes penitential rigors, rejects idols, and is surrounded with a cult of the relics of Sabbatius. Novatians, Sabbateans, and Cathars share the same rigor.

This definition of the Athinganoi captures the attention of the later authors describing the heresy. Three sources may become clear: a form of abjuration dating from the eleventh century,²⁹ an orthodox

²³ Cf. *De haeres.*, P.G., LXXXII, 85b.

²⁴ The history of the Hesychast mystic perfectly reflects this tension between orthodox clergy and mystics.

²⁵ Cf. P.G., CV, 493c.

²⁶ Cf. *Epistula ad Theophilum*, P.G., 95, 369a (§18).

²⁷ Cf. Theophanus, *Chronographia*, 27-8; and Genesisios, Bonn, 13-4.

²⁸ Cf. *Paris. gr.* 1115, fols. 278v-80.

²⁹ Cf. P.G., CVI, 1033-6. For a translation in old Slavic from the eleventh century, cf. A. Dimitrievski, *Bogosluszenie v russkoi tserkvi v XVI v* (Kazan, 1884), I, 55ff.

pamphlet written against the sect,³⁰ and a short text with the same tone which precedes it. The notable point about the last document is the assimilation between the Athinganoi and the ancient heresies of the Melkizedekites and the Theodosians:

I relate the anathema as well to the succeeding teachers of the Athinganoi in each past generation, those of today and those of the future³¹ . . . I relate the anathema to those who observe the Sabbath as the Jews, those who scorn circumcision and baptism in the manner of the Gentiles. I relate the anathema to those who return to the practice of divination, to charms and to magic, and promise to do evil or good with this. I relate the anathema to those who invoke certain demons, their chief being Sorou, Sochan, and Archie, and with their help pull the moon toward themselves, asking it all the questions which they desire. I relate the anathema to those who give the stars the names of men, and who, with their demoniacal caprice, try to incite them one against the other, saying to them: this star will annihilate that one and it is the largest and the most propitious of all the others [we find there a description of an astrological practice resting on magic. This is a classic condemnation of those who consider astrology as being superior to divine revelation]. I relate the anathema to those who, under pretensions of purity, teach the misanthrope, considering every element outside of their faith soiled and who, nevertheless, do not permit approaching or being approached by any other, nor to give nor to take anything whatsoever from the hand of one of their own. If, by accident, something like this does happen, they depart immediately and quickly for their baths of purification and bathe as if they had been soiled and rendered impure. By extension, I relate the anathema to all the other practices or ceremonies or observances of the Athinganoi, practiced secretly or openly by them.

The sect has thus evolved and the references to Judaism are limited to the observance of the Sabbath. Those responsible preach hermiticism and elitism based on levitism, a reference to the Theodosians. In parallel, certain manuscript of the same period use a pamphlet entitled *Concerning the Melkizedekites, the Theodosians, and the Athinganoi*.³² Meanwhile, the text brings no new qualitative information on the Athinganoi, and concerning the description of the magic formulae used by the sect, it is too concise to be useful.

³⁰ The body of the pamphlet is edited in P.G., CXXVII, 879–84. Cf. Petit L., *DTC.*, IV, 264ff.

³¹ These are stereotypical formulae, as are others omitted here. Cf. V. Ermoni, "Abjuration," *Dictionary of Christian Archaeology and Liturgy*, I, Part I, 98–103.

³² Text in G. Bardy, *Revue Biblique* XXXVI (1927): 38, which gives an abridged translation of this manuscript.

For those elements of Judaism proper in the heresy of the Athinganoi, the observance of the Sabbath and circumcision, the author of the pamphlet affirms: "When they are in the company of Jews, they pretend to observe the Sabbath, while from the other side, they are part of the Gentiles, for this reason they flee baptism and circumcision."³³ But the Athinganoi appear above all to be magicians. The author specifies that the incantation to the moon is performed "in the manner of the Thessalonian sorcerers of olden times."³⁴ This recalls an ancient practice consisting of constraining the moon to descend from Paradise into the water of a spring³⁵ in order to bring a divinatory response concerning the type of individual. As well, the popular magic and superstitious practices, inherited from antiquity, are still alive in the Anatolian Byzantine world. This occultism is also astrological, the Athinganoi being required to "give to the stars of the Western sky the names of those against whom evil is sought,"³⁶ and by means of incantations, they can reach the three chief demons which favor a star to annihilate the light of the star which protects a person.³⁷

If the Byzantine emperors have their titled astrologers, the astrology used by the Athinganoi is perceived as heterodox because it is imprinted with paganism. What is more, the elements describing the astrology of the Athinganoi all have a relationship with Phrygia, the birthplace of the different sects. The denouncers of this heterodox movement found there their main argument leading to a condemnation. We find ourselves, thus, before a new evolution of the sect. In effect, if at the beginning the practice of magic among the Athinganoi is quite anchored to a purely Anatolian cultural practice, their movement toward Amorion led the sect to an overture with Judaism. Meanwhile, our latest texts show that the practice of magic was added to an astrological system drawn from the different traditions which are found in the region of Amorion.

The last reference to the Athinganoi dates from the end of the twelfth century in the text of Balsamon. The ecclesiastics, snake charmers, and ventriloquists are called Athinganoi. They sell horoscopes and generally

³³ Cf. *P.G.*, CXXVII, 880.

³⁴ Cf. *id.*

³⁵ Phrygia was at the origin of a cult of the ancient moon goddess Men which expanded in the Roman Empire. Is this reference to the moon the remains of a pagan cult devoted to Men? Probably. Cf. A. Laronde, "Phrygia," *EU* XVIII, 222.

³⁶ Cf. *P.G.*, CXXVII, 881.

³⁷ Cf. *id.*

predict the future, and the author classifies them in the category of *kritriai* (?), false prophets, and hermits.³⁸ This definition also includes practitioners of the popular magic of an intellectual elite capable of casting horoscopes. In addition, the work of Balsamon erases all reference to Judaism and the fact that this heresy sings of occult practices.

To summarize, the principal attacks against the Judaizing Athinganoi begin from the iconoclastic crisis or in reference to this period in Byzantine history: the representation of this heresy serves thus for the politico-religious debate of the time. In parallel, in reaction to these perpetual dangers against orthodoxy, the Byzantine Church reinvested the religious space of Anatolia in the ninth century. This policy bore fruit because information on the sect of the Athinganoi in the tenth century is much more rare. Nevertheless, the form of abjuration of the eleventh century is proof that the sect was still present in Anatolia.

From another angle, numerous sects in Asia Minor remained faithful to the Judaizing traditions of the beginnings of Christianity, in particular the Novatians, Sabbateans, Montanists and Athinganoi. Three causes may explain this phenomenon. First of all, rejection of the iconolatry cult is explained at a time when orthodoxy was not systematically implanted in Anatolian territory. Next, the gyrovagus³⁹ and cenobitic traditions of Anatolia permitted the development of a spirituality parallel to the dogmas professed by the orthodox Church.⁴⁰ Finally, Anatolia is characterized by a synthesis of different elements which each culture contributed upon its arrival in Asia Minor (pagan, Slavic, Armenian, Jewish, Byzantine, Turkish from the eleventh century, etc.), and which is quite often in opposition to that proposed by the Empire. As well, the Anatolian peninsula is a place of meetings and exchanges leading to the birth of disparate heresies, of dogmas and

³⁸ Cf. P.G., CXXXVII, 720 et ff., 741. Cf. L. Oeconomus, *Religious Life in the Byzantine Empire in the Time of Comnenes and the Angels* (Paris, 1918), 223 n. 3.

³⁹ The Gyrovagian monks, recluses, and other solitaries have always attracted and at the same time worried the Byzantines. Those inspired and eccentrics religious figures were a danger to the orthodoxy. At the time of Sabbatios/Symbatios, one can add the example of a pseudo hermit who might have been an Athingan. Cf. Theophanus, *Chronographia*, I, 488 et 496. The fact that this practice was still alive in Anatolia might explain, in turn, the development of itinerant sufis of which many of those who tracked through the Byzantine world took up the habit in Anatolia.

⁴⁰ Cf. J. Gouillard, "Heresy in the Byzantine Empire Originating in the XIIth Century," *Works and Memoirs* 1 (1965), 299-324; and M. Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy," *DOP* 25 (1972): 85-113.

practices—magic, in particular—often opposed to the official theology and which are socially overshadowed by the sense of community.

II. FINAL TESTIMONY: THE CHIONAI

The last testimony of Judaizing Christians dates from the fourteenth century. But from the middle of the eleventh century, the Anatolian political countryside changed considerably. In effect, the major party of Anatolia was no longer under Byzantine domination but Turkish. Meanwhile, the exchanges—numerous and authenticated—of techniques, ideas, and cultural elements among Turks, Seljuks then Ottomans, and Byzantine Christians, European or Anatolian, does not fundamentally change an Anatolian culture inclined towards syncretism. Much to the contrary, the domination of the Turks, Islamized or not, and still intermixed with shamanism, is not followed by the imposition of Turkish culture in the conquered regions. If one takes for example the orders of Anatolians sufis, syncretism and communality played an important role in the constitution of these mystical doctrines.⁴¹ Moreover, the Anatolian culture particularly shocked foreign Muslims who very often condemned their liberal mores and their ideas judged as non-conforming to Muslim Sharia.⁴² This is why we join Michel Balivet's thesis affirming that the culture of Anatolia finds its most complete expression since the Seljuk and Ottoman period.⁴³

From a temporal point of view, the cohabitation of orthodox or Armenian Christians, rabbinical Jews or Karaites, and Muslims does not occur without shocks or prejudices, but also does not involve major persecutions. Later, after the beginning of the Ottoman Beylicate, intellectual life flourished.⁴⁴ It would be historically false to think

⁴¹ For the Ottoman period, cf. A. Ocak, "The Sufi Environment in the Territories of the Ottoman Beylicate and the Problem of the 'Abdalan-i Rum,'" in *The Ottoman Emirate (1300–1389)* ed., E. Zachariadou (Crete, 1994), 145–58.

⁴² For example, the traveler ibn Battuta is particularly shocked at the place of honor reserved for the Jewish doctor of the Emir of Birgi (Pyrgion) in Asia Minor (*Voyage of ibn Battuta*, trans. Yerasimos G., II, (Paris, 1997), 429): "The judge and the doctor rose in his honor. He sat facing the sultan, on the podium, and the readers of the Koran were below him."

⁴³ Cf. M. Balivet, *Byzantine Romania, and Turkish Romanian Countries: A Greco-Turkish Interleaving Place* (Istanbul, 1994), *passim*.

⁴⁴ Cf. I. Mélikoff, "The Social Origin of the First Ottomans," in *The Ottoman Emirate (1300–1389)*, ed., Zachariadou, 135–44.

that the debut of the Ottoman empire is characterized by crass ignorance, because almost immediately the first sultans were concerned with attracting and forming a renowned intellectual elite.⁴⁵ It is in this open environment that there evolved a baptized Judaizing movement, 'Chionai', from Byzantine Christian sources. In parallel, a process challenging a Thessalonian named Chionios, accused of Judaizing (1336), teaches us that Judaizers lived at the heart of the Byzantine Empire.

A. Sources and Historiographical Elements

The affair implicating Chionios is peculiar in that it is the sole trial of a Judaizer at the heart of the Empire. We can summarize the affair this way.⁴⁶ It begins with a meeting of a synod charged, in the first place, with naming a new Metropolitan for the city of Thessalonica.

"Some time"⁴⁷ ago, Chionios slandered the very honorable deacon Cabasilas, the bursar of the very holy diocese of Thessalonica, as well as the very honorable Cartophilaxis Strymbakonas, and Sakkelios Bryennios. The reason for this is that the clergy and the monks had declared that this Chionios, with his brothers, had foresworn Christian piety and embraced Jewish thought. The authorities rigorously examined his declarations concerning the Church and his presumably Judaizing practices. They then decided to arrest him. They seized him and presented him before the most powerful and holy emperor so that he could be guarded. Since then, this Chionios has fostered a special hatred against Cabasilas, Strymbakonas, and Bryennios. Finally, he must go on trial before the imperial court.

At the time of his inquest, Chionios is obligated to name his professors and his students.⁴⁸ After several comments, he returns the accusations against the ecclesiastics. His invectives turn, from the very first, against Cabasilas whom Chionios, informed by a certain Staxytzès, accuses of having practiced magic in his youth. Then he recounts

⁴⁵ Cf. H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300–1600* (London, 2003), 165–204 and, for a more complete bibliography, M. Balivet, "The Medical Sciences in the Byzantine-Ottoman Atmosphere, from the Emergence of the Anatolian Emirates to the Sacking of Constantinople," in id., *The Turks in the Middle Ages: From the Crusades to the Ottomans* (Istanbul, 2002), 73–86.

⁴⁶ Cf. F. Miklosich et J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana* 1, (Vienna 1856–1857), 174–8.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 174.

⁴⁸ The act of demanding the accused to name his teachers, his brothers in study, and his students is part of the normal procedure.

the affair concerning the maltreatment of Jews by some foreigners. In effect, certain newcomers (*epoikôn*) to the city met some Jews and slandered them, insulting at the same time their "praises" and their faith. Chionios then complains about these intolerable humiliations, arguing that these foreigners caused affront to the law of Moses given by God. While this was going on, he went to Chartophylax to denounce the malefactors. Carried away by his passion, he affirms that the newcomers are doing no good by acting in this way but also that the Thessalonians honor their patron saint more than Christ by gathering in the Church of the great martyr Saint Demetrius and avoiding the Church of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. At these unconscionable words, Chartophylax answers that the Thessalonians honor the Martyr for Christ more than Christ himself.

Concerning Sakellios, Chionios affirms that he knows nothing of him, but that he heard it said by George Angelos, the friend of the very powerful and holy sovereign, that Bryennios does not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Meanwhile, these latter were not able to move from the capital to testify because of their advanced age. On his side, Bryennios draws up a letter, in the presence of the nobles of Thessalonica, giving proof of his good faith. Finally, after deliberation, the synod considers that the accusations brought against Cabasilas and Strymbakonas arise from slander and Chionios is deposed from his sole charge and condemned to being barred from the holy ministry. Finally, based on the principle that Chionios accuses without proof, the three ecclesiastics are released and the slanders of Chionios are upheld as charged.

This affair poses numerous problems. First of all, it does not appear that in the first part of the trial Chionios had much to suffer from under the accusation of Judaizing. Finally, it is more the slanders of Chionios against his accusers that led to his trial before the holy synod, than his Judaizing practices.

The accusation of magic is a sensitive subject at this period⁴⁹ and it seems logical that the nobles would therefore want to be placed above any suspicion. But the affair which implicates Chionios is above all a totally Thessalonician matter, and the fact that the synod does not remove the first accusation affirming that Chionios has embraced Juda-

⁴⁹ Cf. R. Greenfield, "A Contribution to the Study of Palaeologan Magic," in *Byzantine Magic*, ed., H. Maguire (Cambridge, 1995), 117-53.

ism, proves that the nobles did not want the synod to devote too much time to this question and preferred, as a priority, to be cleansed of all suspicion. The synod accepted not to rule on the case of Judaization, thinking probably that these allegations had no foundation. On the contrary, it seems astounding that a religious tribunal—an orthodoxy that profoundly rejects the idea of conversion to another religion—would be given such a case if the accusation of Judaizing had had a solid foundation.

Meanwhile, what does the accusation of Judaizing cover? If it permits general criticism of the Latin theology, it seems that this is not the case in the affair concerning Chionios.

B. *Historiographic States*

The heresy of the Chionai was described by sources who related the captivity of the orthodox saint Gregory Palamas among the Ottoman Turks (1350).⁵⁰

In parallel, studies of the mysterious Chionai are numerous. Let us leave aside the authors who turn them into Muslim blockheads, such as Arnakis who associates them with the brotherhood of the *Ahi*,⁵¹ merchants and artisans linked to Anatolian sufism, or Paul Wittek,⁵² who takes up the explanation of Du Cange,⁵³ and assimilates them into Doctors of Law. He proposes, meanwhile, an etymology of the word Chionai: Hodja, χότζας, χότζιας⁵⁴ becomes χόγγιας to end up finally with χόνιας and χιόνιας, which smacks of intellectual acrobatics. These different interpretations rest on a partial study of the sources, which explains why they remain incomplete.

⁵⁰ Cf. the translation of these sources in A. Philippidis-Braat, "The Captivity of Palamas among the Turks: File and Commentary," *Works and Memoirs* 7 (1979): 109–222.

⁵¹ Cf. G. Arnakis, *Οἱ πρότοι Ὀθωμάνοι* (Athens, 1947), 18; idem, "Gregory Palamas among the Turks and Documents of his Captivity as Historical Sources," *Speculum* 26 (1951): 113–4; idem, "Gregory Palamas, the Χιόνες, and the Fall of Gallipoli," *Byzantion* 22 (1952): 305–9.

⁵² Cf. P. Wittek, "Χιόνες," *Byzantion* 21 (1951): 421–3.

⁵³ C. du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores Mediae et Infimae Graecitais* (Lyon, 1688), word 'Χιονάδης.'

⁵⁴ Cf. G. Morascsik, *Byzantinoturcica, II, Sprachreste des Türkenvölker in des byzantinischen Quellen* (Budapest, 1943), 289.

Other writers (Arsenij and Ilarij) consider the Chionai as Jews.⁵⁵ For Prohorov, they are more precisely Karaite Jews.⁵⁶ His arguments are based on the idea that these Chionai refused to celebrate the Jewish Passover,⁵⁷ without envisaging the conversion of Jews to Islam, which would also constitute an explanation. Finally, Jugie⁵⁸ and Vryonis⁵⁹ consider them to be Jews who became Muslims. In return, for Jean Meyendorff,⁶⁰ they are Christians converted to Judaism in order to be nearer to the Muslims, which appears to be an astonishing approach and which does not explain why they did not convert directly to Islam; whereas Anna Philippidis-Braat⁶¹ defines them as Christians with a Judaizing tendency which one can “hold as probable the conversion to Islam.”⁶²

For his part, Michel Balivet⁶³ believes that the Chionai movement belongs to a heresy which includes at the same time Christians converted to Judaism and Jews who embraced Islam, these two groups having the common trait of practicing astrology. According to him, the term Chionai finds its origin in the Arabic word *Kâhin* which in Turkish means the diviners, the astrologers, the tellers of good stories, the priests of the Jews, and people who predict the future, from ancient Egypt to India.⁶⁴ The difficulty with his thesis remains the change from the substantive plural of *Kâhin*, *Kühhân*, singular *Kâhn-i*, to the word Chionai and Chionios which is explained by the fact that these different words are phonetically similar.⁶⁵

⁵⁵ Cf. Arsenij and Ilarij, *Opisanie slavjankih rukopisej biblioteki Svjato-Troitzkoj Sergievoj Lavry*, I, (1878), 85.

⁵⁶ Cf. G. Prohorov, “Prenie Grigorija Palamy’s Chiony i turki’i problema ‘židovskaja mudrostvujuščih,” *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury* 27 (1972): 329–69.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Dialexis*, §14 in Philippidis-Braat, op. cit.

⁵⁸ Cf. M. Jugie, article ‘Palamas,’ *DTC*, XI, 1747.

⁵⁹ Cf. S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the XIth Through the XVth Century*, (Berkeley, 1971), 427.

⁶⁰ Cf. J. Meyendorff, *Introduction to the Study of Gregory Palamas* (Paris, 1959), 160–162 and *idem*, “Greeks, Turks, and Jews in Asia Minor, in the XIVth century,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* I (1966): 216–7.

⁶¹ Cf. Philippidis-Braat, “Captivity,” 216–7.

⁶² Cf. *idem*.

⁶³ Cf. M. Balivet, “Byzantine Judaizers and Islamified Jews, from the Kühân (kâhin) to the Chionai (Chionios),” *Byzantion* LII (1982), reedited in *id.*, *Byzantines and Ottomans: Relations, Interactions, Successions* (Istanbul 1999), 151–81.

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 164 n. 4.

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 165 n. 1.

Finally, Steven Bowman⁶⁶ perceives as untenable the hypothesis of Christians converting to Judaism in Muslim countries, accepting nevertheless that an exception is possible in Ottoman lands. He also considers this movement as marginal and finds the origin of these Chionai with a people living in the hinterland between the Byzantine world and the Ottoman, semi-pagan or Christian, which was implanted in the area of Bursa for unknown reasons. In this case, Palamas would have made an amalgam of these Chionai and the Chionios affair in order to present these latter by the vague term of the Judaizers. The author does not appear able to contribute a hypothesis built on the origin of these Chionai and even asks himself if it is legitimate to relate the Chionai to Chionios. In the end, he leaves the question open.

C. *Toward a New Heresy?*

In the *Dialexis*, Taronites relates a discussion between Palamas and the “Chionai impious.”⁶⁷ These latter arrived by order of the Sultan Orkhan to discuss with the Metropolitan theological issues, which serves as proof that they were considered savants.⁶⁸ The *Letter to his Church* explains to us the causes of the confrontation: Taronites attempts to persuade Orkhan to have Gregory Palamas conveyed to Nicaea.

And he interrogated him on my subject, saying: “Who is then this monk and what kind of man is he?” And when he had replied, the emir took over: “I also have men knowledgeable and shrewd who will debate with him,” and he sent immediately for the Chionai, men who had not studied and learned from Satan anything other than blasphemy and impudence in relation to our Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God.⁶⁹

The text progresses by returning directly to the recitation of Taronites describing the dispute between the doctor of the Church and the Chionai where it is stated:

[The Chionai] feared to engage in discussion in [the sultan’s] presence...they attempted to take us to task...in order not to have to talk in any way about these [theological] questions...they returned to maneu-

⁶⁶ Cf. S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium (1204–1453)* (Alabama, 1985), 68–70.

⁶⁷ “αθέους Χιόναις,” cf. Philippidis-Braat, “Captivity,” *Dialexis, Introduction*. I emphasize that the adjective atheist is systematically associated with Islam, which suggests that the Chionai are Muslims.

⁶⁸ Cf. also, *Letter to his Church*, §17, lines 5–11.

⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, *Letter to his Church*, §18.

vering to be able, at the very least, not to talk in the presence of their lord, and they succeeded. The latter then designated numerous archons as well as one named Palapanos; they arrived at the same time as the Chionai there where the Metropolitan was to be found.⁷⁰

It thus appears that the Chionai refused to debate before Orkhan, a sign that they are not sure of their knowledge. We also have important information on the origin of the Chionai, new converts to Islam and poor in their knowledge of Muslim theology, who did not, in any case, wish to discuss theological matters before the sultan from a fear of making the level of their ignorance known. Perhaps the knowledge of these “knowledgeable and shrewd men” is more philosophical or scientific? But then, why would the sultan not propose a meeting with Muslim theologians? From a desire to test the faith of the Chionai? More particularly, Taronites teaches us regarding the religion abandoned by the Chionai:

And the substance of [the Chionais’] discourse returned to this: “We have heard ten commandments which Moses brought down from the mountain, written on tablets of stone, and we have learned that the Turks observe them; thus we have renounced our former opinions, we have rallied to them and we also have been made into Turks.”⁷¹

It thus appears that they were Jews, Romaniotes of Anatolia converted to Islam, an element confirmed by Palamas’s response:

But this, I will not do it to plead before the Chionai: these, in effect, according to what I have already heard about them, and according to what they have just said, are manifestly Hebrews and not Turks; and I, in these circumstances, I do not talk to Hebrews. This is the mystery of our faith.⁷²

This raises a new element: the Metropolitan knows of the existence of these personages and he refuses to talk with them, arguing that he does not debate with Jews! Gregory Palamas as well does not recognize the validity of their apostasy, which can be understood if one considers the problems of conversions of Christians to Islam in Anatolia. In effect, one must remain aware that *The Letter to his Church* and the *Letter to an unknown* have as their goal the reinforcement of Christians in their faith in the face of the danger of conversion to Islam. Since it is

⁷⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, §1.

⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*, §2.

⁷² Cf. *ibid.*, §4.

probable that Palamas reviewed the text of Taronites, it is not astonishing that the latter emphasizes the condemnation of apostasy.

The rest of the debate is confusing and it is difficult for us to distinguish the interventions of the Chionai from those of the Turks who also participated in the dispute. One single invective is to be mentioned: "On that, the Chionai interrupted him again."⁷³

This element allows us to think, despite Palamas's willingness not to respond to them, that it was they who directed a good part of the debate. As well, during the course of the reported discussion, Turks and Chionai are confused by the author. Finally, seeing the quarrel turning to their disadvantage, those Turks in charge got up and left. But "one of these Chionai, remaining behind, insulted the grand archbishop of God in an ignoble way and, throwing himself upon him, slapped his face,"⁷⁴ no doubt this last episode serves to diabolize the Chionai movement.

The Chionai are knowledgeable. Perhaps they are Doctors of Law, Hodjas? But probably not, because Palamas would not have hesitated to mention it, emphasizing as well his victory over the Muslim theologians. One must thus consider these Chionai as Jews converted to Islam, whose knowledge permits them to converse with the Metropolitan on a theological subject and whose residence is close to that of the sultan. Another conclusion that suggests itself, given that these Chionai tend not to take part in the theological debate against Palamas, is that these refugees from Judaism have only a partial knowledge of their new religion.⁷⁵ This hesitation leads us to question the sincerity of their conversion: maybe it is of a social nature above all and these new converts practice Islam on the surface, while remaining attached to a crypto-Judaism. In this case, the debate with Palamas would have served as a revelation by putting in exergue an interpretation of Islam which would have been judged heretical because of its superficiality.

In parallel, Islam traditionally chooses Jews, Islamified or not, in theological controversies against Christians, because of their knowledge of the Scriptures and their familiarity with the language of the

⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*, §13.

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, §16.

⁷⁵ The fear of sanctions linked to the loss of the theological dispute is fully justified. For example, after a theological debate between Christians and Jews, lost by the latter and arbitrated by the Caliph 'Abd-al-Malik: "The Caliph ordained that the Jew be overcome by blows and that he be tossed shamefully outside," cf. P. Peeters, "The Passion of Saint-Michel the Sabaite," *Analecta Bollandiana* XLVIII (1930): 71-2.

adversary.⁷⁶ The choice of the sultan to call upon Jews by origin within the framework of a controversy should therefore not surprise us. In fact, Romaniotes Jews have certain competences to liven the debates: they are often multilingual (Greek, Turkish, Arabic, etc.) and some may have an idea of the grand themes of orthodox Christianity.

It appears, therefore, that these Islamified Jews play the traditional role incumbent on them in the Muslim culture, which is to ridicule Doctors of Law. The sole element which characterizes them is their erudition. Thus, we find ourselves facing a movement of which we know very little but which was known to Palamas before his captivity. Finally, the patriarch Philotheus Kokkinos describes them clearly as apostate Christians in terms which leave no room for ambiguity: "traitors to Christianity,"⁷⁷ "apostates of the Christ and of his Church,"⁷⁸ and as persons having "cut their links with the Christians."⁷⁹

Such a divergence of sources concerning the religious origin of the Chionai leads us to several questions. Was the patriarch Philotheus misleading in describing them as Christians converted to Judaism where his teacher described them as Jews who had embraced Islam? Should one formally reject the passages of the patriarch in relation to the Chionai? To resolve the difficulty presented by the contradiction of sources, we must define the goal which causes the sources to mention them.

First of all, the *Letter to his Church* and the *Dialexis* are apologetic texts with the goal of informing and transmitting to the flock what the saint has learned about Islam and the Muslims, the attitude of the Turks in relation to the Christians, their theological arguments, and the responses with which one must oppose them.⁸⁰ In this case, it is

⁷⁶ In an Islamo-Christian controversy, the emir against his Christian adversary requested the assistance of "a Jew who was reputed knowledgeable of the Scriptures," F. Nau, "A Colloquy of the Patriarch John with the Emir Agarien Carried Out During the Years 712-716," *Journal Asiatique* 1 (1915): 260-1; the same reaction occurred in a discussion between the Caliph 'Abda-al-Malik and a monk: "Then, the commander of the believers had a Jew brought in, instructed in the law, in order to defeat the monk," P. Peeters, op. cit., 70. As for the role of interpreter played by the Jews, cf. for example Ibn Battuta, *Voyages*, II, 429.

⁷⁷ Cf. Philotheus, *Enkômion*, Paris. Gr. 421, f. 362, 364v and coisl. 98, f. 264v., 257v.

⁷⁸ Cf. idem, *Acolouthia in Honor of Gregory Palamas*, ed., B. Voloudakis (le Pirée, 1978), 118.

⁷⁹ Cf. idem.

⁸⁰ With this goal, he advises those who are interested to consult the *Dialexis*, cf. *Letter to his Church*, §17.

logical that the description of the Jewish apostates in the *Letter to his Church* is relegated to the second plane. One other point which allows us to explain why the doctor of the Church showed himself so discreet toward the apostates of Christianity in favor of Judaism, is that conversions of Jews could announce, from a theological point of view, the mass apostasy of Christians occurring under the Ottoman yoke.

In effect, in the orthodox Christian tradition, the complete conversion of the Jews announces the appearance of Christ, a belief firmly anchored in the Empire, and the phenomenon of the apostasy of Jews to Islam would interfere with this tradition by announcing the victory of the Muslims over the Christians.⁸¹ One thus understands why Palamas leaves this question to the second plane and why only Taronites, who was a doctor and not a man of the Church, undertook to report the theological dispute, taking care not to define who the Chionai were. Far from doubting the historicity of the two texts, it remains inconceivable that the two writers erred in the identity of their interlocutors. In effect, the archbishop and Taronites, the only two witnesses of the interview, were in the best place of anyone to identify the Chionai: would they not be privy to denounce a movement which involved the apostasy of Christians? Meanwhile, one can ask if the two writers would have taken the trouble to describe a movement of Christian apostates toward Judaism. In effect, these two sources, as we have emphasized, have apologetic goals and try to morally support the Christian communities living under the yoke of a state both antagonistic to Christianity and which represents a real danger to orthodoxy. But the risk of apostasy in favor of Islam is above all emphasized in these two works and it is highly probable that the authors' task would be more complicated if they had described the case, no doubt marginal, of Christians having embraced Judaism. In fact, this last point would only have dulled their discourse and would have contributed additional confusion to the tale.

The work of Philotheus has a totally different goal: the *Enkômion*, in particular, presents itself as a panegyric meant to fix the reputation of Palamas as a doctor and as a saint. The author thus has the objective of setting in relief the exemplariness of the life and the work of the man who, involved in all the grand contemporary theological and

⁸¹ Cf., concerning the Turkish tradition in particular, S. Yerasimos, *The Foundation of Constantinople and of Sainte Sophie* (Paris, 1990), 193–200.

social problems, knows how to adopt positions which have value as a reference and a model to be imitated, including facing the danger of apostasy so preoccupying in the fourteenth century. But, if the Chionai are Jews converted to Islam, this phenomenon of apostasy does not at all concern Christianity and the Patriarch especially wanted to insist that the fringe of Christian Chionai converted to Judaism.

The question which concerns us is the following: did the Patriarch invent, from all the pieces, these Chionai refugees from Christianity or is he referring to reality? It seems evident that if Philotheus had created this episode and its protagonists from some work, he would probably have presented the Christians as converts to Islam, the great preoccupation of the moment, and not to Judaism. But we find the case is that of apostate Christians. It is thus probable that Philotheus gives us the echo of reality.⁸² If one considers the accusations dealing

⁸² We also note that, at the beginning of the fourteenth century in Crete, some Christians converted to Judaism. This was witnessed by the canonist Oldrado da Ponte, who brings us the reflections of the Franciscan Andreas Doto upon his return from the Isle. In his *Consilia et quaestiones aureae*, composed at Avignon between 1320 and 1337, Oldrado records the activity of the Roman Inquisition on the Isle and also deals with concrete cases. The first five cases examined may be divided into two categories: the first deals with Jews who converted but then returned to their former religion, the second deals with the question of Christians who embraced Judaism. This last part is odd. Here is what the text says: "Once the inquisitor inquired on the behalf [of the converted Christians] other Jews, who knew them as Christians, contradicted them to the point where they left the country, then they could be neither arrested nor brought back to Christianity... because there were constraints on leaving after having received support and money from these Jews." Conversion of Christians to Judaism was forbidden in the Byzantine Empire as in western Christianity; it thus seems that the Jews of Crete feared serious reprisals from the mere presence of these converts discovered by the Inquisition who fled "to the country of the Saracens," probably Egypt. This flight of apostate Christians to Egypt should not be surprising. Alexandria appeared as a haven of peace for the persecuted. Further on in the text, a Christian child, probably a slave, is circumcised. After the death of his master, the child is brought to the house of another Jew who sends him to Alexandria out of fear that his protégé will be returned to the bosom of the Church. More tragic is the case of a Christian slave who converted to Judaism and who became the wife of her former master to whom she bore two children. When the matter was discovered, the Jew killed his wife and his second child. After the death of his father, the remaining child was sent to Egypt by his tutor. This case illuminates the repeated laws forbidding Jews from having Christian slaves. But they recall as well a reality presupposing that Jews and Christians dwelled in the same space, the *Judaica* conserving Christian habitats; Jews and Christians did business together, shared the same public spaces, and sometimes copulated. In summary, they lived side by side, which implied a certain intimacy which could go as far as renunciation of one's faith. For more details, cf. D. Jacoby, "Venice, The Inquisition, and the Jewish Communities of Crete in the Early Fourteenth Century," *Studi veneziani* 12 (1970): 138ff.

with the Jewish origin of Philotheus,⁸³ the Patriarch is already alert to the porous relations between the Jewish and Christian communities. At the same time, if certain Jews converted to Christianity, it is not astonishing that the reverse, the apostasy of Christians for the benefit of Judaism, took place. It is equally possible that the Judaizing movement saw an increase in fervor particularly at the moment of the writing of the *Enkômion*. In any form, and no matter the geographic area described, the Patriarch clearly indicates that the Chionai certainly did rank as Christians converted to Judaism. As well, we have clear proof of a Judaizing movement in the fourteenth century.

Finally, the historical validity of Philotheus's text, which completes the texts of Palamas and Taronites, should not be put again to test. We thus arrive at the conclusion that the texts of the *Letter* and of the *Dialexis* teach us about the Chionai of Jewish origin who converted to Islam, while the text of Philotheus teaches us that, among the Chionai, some were of Christian origin who had at a particular moment embraced Judaism.

According to the sources, Chionios of Thessalonica and the Chionai of Palamas have in common the point of being Christians accused of developing links that are too direct with Judaism. In return, their Jewish practices are difficult to define. The accusation against the Chionios of "Judaizing" may involve a total conversion to the Jewish faith as easily as it may mean the adoption of certain Jewish laws and practices. Meanwhile, when Philotheus talks of this new "heresy and impiety,"⁸⁴ it is certain that he is not referring to a simple conversion to Judaism but rather to the appearance of a new syncretic dissidence composed of knowledgeable men: Chionios is invited to speak to his teachers and his disciples;⁸⁵ the sultan Orkhan speaks of the Chionai as "knowledgeable and shrewd men;"⁸⁶ and Palamas primarily attacks their knowl-

⁸³ Cf. on this question V. Laurent, "Philotheé Kokkinos," *DTC* XII: 1498; P. Joannou, "Life of S. Germain the Hagiorite by his Contemporary Philotheus of Constantinople," *Analecta Bolendiana* LXX (1952): 35-114; H. Beck, *Kirche und Theologische Literatur im Byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), 723-4 which proposes the idea that conversion dates from the mother of the Patriarch, an idea taken up by S. Kourouses, "Philotheos," *Threskeutike kai Ethike Enkyklopaideia* II (Athens, 1967), 1119; and I. Dentake, *Bios kai Akolouthia tou hagiou Philotheou Patriarchou Konstantinopoleos tou theologou* (Athens, 1971).

⁸⁴ Cf. Kokkinos P., *Antirhetoric against Gregoras*, XII, P.G., CLI, 1130 D.

⁸⁵ Cf. M.M., I, 175.

⁸⁶ Cf. *Letter to his Church*, §17.

edge.⁸⁷ According to Philotheus,⁸⁸ Nil,⁸⁹ and Gregoras,⁹⁰ Palamas had a discussion with some wise men. It is without a doubt for this reason that Du Cange joined these names to that of Chioniadis,⁹¹ the three terms having the same root, Chion-.

Finally, the term Chionai poses certain problems from a linguistic point of view. In effect, Palamas's mysterious interlocutors were designated by a grammatical form, non-existent in Greek, known as ΧΙΩΝΕΣ, which suggests a foreign origin for this word.⁹² However, the *Letter to his Church* gives only the accusative ΧΙΩΝΑΣ, while the nominative ΧΙΩΝΑΙ is attested to several times in the *Dialexis* and the manuscript tradition does not present any variant on this point.⁹³ In parallel, in the passage of the *Syntax* of Chrysokokkis who worked to render the work of Chioniadis⁹⁴ more clear, the word ΧΙΩΝΙΑΔΗΣ may be a qualifier applied to a wise man gone to Persia, who consequently, acquired it as his name. It thus appears probable that the roots of the

⁸⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Cf. Kokkinos P., *Antirhetoric*, loc. cit.

⁸⁹ Cf. Nil, *Enkômion*, P.G., 151, 675 D.

⁹⁰ Cf. Gregoras N., *ΡΩΜΑΙΚΗΣ*, III, 231.

⁹¹ Gregory Chioniadis was a doctor and an astronomer. He lived at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth. His life is singular: he was one of the first Byzantines to seek scientific knowledge outside of the Empire and made numerous voyages to Tabriz, where supported by numerous disciples, he translated scientific as well as philosophic works from Arabic and from Persian into Greek. His scientific and linguistic training as well as the anonymity of his disciples still pose numerous questions to researchers.

⁹² This incorrect form reflects on Du Cange, *loc. cit.*, who deduced this nominative from the accusative which he read in the *Letter to his Church*, §17. It was accepted without hesitation by all who dealt with this problem, often giving way to long and laborious grammatical discussions, because the singular of this plural form supposedly never ceased to intrigue: cf. P. Wittek, *op. cit.*, 422–3; and G. Arnakis, *op. cit.*, 307–8.

⁹³ As well the fact remarked by Philippidis-Braat, "Captivity," 214.

⁹⁴ "I studied Persian astronomy with a priest of Trebizond named Manuel. He reported to me that a certain Chioniadis, who was elevated at Constantinople, has fallen in love with mathematics and other sciences. After he had mastered medicine, he wanted to study astronomy; he was informed that, with the goal of satisfying his desires, he had to go to Persia. He traveled to Trebizond, and the emperor Comnenes provided him with assistants... and he arrived in Persia. He then learned all that he wished to know, and returned to Trebizond, bringing back from Persia numerous astronomical texts which he had translated into Greek. The best of these texts has no commentary; the present Ἐζήγησις responds to this need." The text of the prologue is contained in the following manuscripts: *Leidensis* BPG 74E, folios 80–85; *Marc. gr.* 309, folios 41–66; *Marc. gr.* 327, folios 24–48; *Paris. gr.* 2401, folios 1–36; *Paris. gr.* 2402, folios 1 and following; *Paris. gr.* 2461, folios 151^v–187^v; *Vat. gr.* 209, folios 1–31^v; *Vat. gr.* 210, folios 8–39^v. On this question, cf. H. Usener, *Ad historiam astronomiae symbola*, *Kleine Schriften* III (Leipzig, 1914), 323–71.

words XIONÍΔΗΣ on one hand, XÍONIOΣ and XÍONAI on the other hand, are of foreign origin.⁹⁵ This heresy, in direct relationship with Judaism—groups of Islamized Jews along with Judaized Christians, thus syncretists—and practicing astronomy and astrology in an Anatolia with various principalities sensitive to the practice of the occult,⁹⁶ finds its natural place in the Ottoman Beylicate.

III. CONCLUSION

At the end of this chapter, the different Judaizing movements presented seem at the same time marked by diversity but also by a certain unity. First of all, they reappear after a particularly long vigil between the Athinganoi and the Chionai. After that, they wear a highly marked syncretic character as well as an inclination toward community, perhaps even isolationism. Aside from the iconoclastic aspect borrowed from Judaism, according to the Christian authors of the East, the members of these sects have an immoderate taste for the occult. Finally, if certain Judaizing movements resemble each other or if different sensitivities are confused—consciously or not—by the doctors of the Church, it remains difficult to think of a strict relationship between the Judaizing heresies of the Byzantine era covering the period from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries.

But it does not prevent us from doing so. We have above all insisted on the syncretic aspect of the Anatolian area, and more on the level of the populations, of the shrewd contacts among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, this theme should merit a separate study. In particular at the end of the Byzantine Empire, it is the apocalyptic beliefs which form a powerful vector for the exchange among the religions of the Book, in addition to the expansion of the Sufic movements which were very open to other religions, be they Abrahamic but also including shamanism, Zoroastrianism, and so on. As well, the Anatolian cultural

⁹⁵ For the etymology of the root chion-, I return to the article by M. Balivet, "Judaizing Byzantines," *passim*, which seems to me to be the most probable.

⁹⁶ Notice, at the same time, the edition of astrological ephemerides done at Trebizond and which were saved for the year 1336–1337 in the *Monacensis gr.* 525 among the works of André Libadinos. Cf. folios 155–172. This manuscript is described in CCAG 7: 152–60; S. Lampros, *Τραπεζουντιακόν του έτους 1336, Νέος Έλληνομνήμων* 13 (1916): 33–50. Attribution of these ephemerides to André Libadinos is rejected by O. Lampsidis, *‘Ανδρέου Λιβαδινού Βίος και έργα* (Athens, 1975); and R. Mercier, *An Almanach for Trebizond for the Year 1336* (C. A. B VII 1994).

heritage was revived by the Turkish presence and stimulated by the apocalyptic charge linked to the fall of Byzantium.

In those uncertain times, it seems then that a number—certainly modest—of Christians were tempted by a vision of the syncretic world proposing a utopian world where social and religious barriers would fall definitively.

Our reflection might stop here if the Judaizers and the syncretic movements had not developed only in the Ottoman lands in the fifteenth century with the revolt of Börkluce and of Bedreddin of Samavna,⁹⁷ in Bulgaria,⁹⁸ and in Serbia at the same time, and in Russia during the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries.⁹⁹ What part did the Byzantine Judaizing heresies play—directly or indirectly—in these different movements?

One final word. I recently reread a work of Henri Corbin which admirably presented—among other things—the richness of Sorhvardi's thought: I then understood my desire to present this chapter not through considering the Judaizing movements as somewhat dusty folklore, dating from another age, but by emphasizing the legitimacy of these enterprises which merit a look, on the part of the researcher, particularly distinguished by the seal of otherness.

⁹⁷ Cf. M. Balivet, *Mystical Islam and Armed Revolution in the Ottoman Balkans: Life of Sheik Bedreddin the 'Hallaj of the Turks' (1358/59–1416)* (Istanbul, 1995), *passim*.

⁹⁸ Cf. D. Gonis, *The History of the Orthodox Churches of Bulgaria and Serbia*, (Athens, 1999), *passim* (Greek).

⁹⁹ On Judaizing Russians, cf. Vernadsky, *Russia at the Dawn of the Modern Age* (New Haven, 1959), index: 'Heresy of the Judaizers.' In the sixteenth century, "The Pilgrimage of the Merchant Basil Posniakov to the Holy Places of the East (1558–1561)," in *Russian Itineraries in the East*, ed., S. Khitrovo (Geneva, 1889), 290, we learn that the Jews "have no dwelling in the realm of our sovereign; he also forbade commerce to the Jews and closed to them entry into their territory." In comparison, Poland and Lithuania were important Jewish population centers. Cf. also the studies of L. Berry and R. Crummey, *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth Century English Voyagers* (Madison, 1968); C. Halperin, "Judaizers and the Image of the Jew in Medieval Russia: A Polemic Revisited and a Question Posed," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 9 (1975): 141–55; S. Ettinger, "The Muscovite State and its Attitude Concerning the Jews," *Zion* 18 (1953): 138–166 (Hebrew); and id., "The Jewish Influence on Religious Effervescence in Eastern Europe at the End of the XVth Century," *Y. F., Baer Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1960), 228–47 (Hebrew). It seems that the heresy of the Judaizers arrived in Russia by way of Hungary, then Poland and Lithuania. It would be interesting to study the participation of the Karaites, very present in these countries, in its spread.

ROMANOS THE MELODIST AND PALESTINIAN PIYYUT: SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

Cyril Aslanov

Besides the anecdotal fact that Romanos the Melodist was perhaps of Jewish origin, there is more than one reason for comparing the huge corpus of his hymns with the poetic production of Palestinian Jews, and more specifically with Yannai's *piyyutim*. Indeed, Yannai and Romanos are exactly contemporaneous¹ and they undoubtedly belong to the same cultural context of Byzantine-dominated Near East. Throughout Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, Hellenism and the ancestral languages and cultures of the Orient competed with each other according to a dynamic that can be compared, *mutatis mutandis*, with contemporary confrontation between globalization and antiglobalization.² The rise of Coptic, Armenian, and Syriac literacy, as well as the affirmation of a rabbinical culture using Hebrew and Aramaic as upper languages are to be replaced in a broader context, where Hellenism was simultaneously an object of rejection and a model of emulation for the non-Hellenic cultures.

Although Romanos's resort to Greek has to do with his acceptance of official Orthodoxy and his implicit rejection of the Syriac blend of Christianity,³ one could ask what were the political and social motivations of the religious and cultural opportunities taken by this Syrian poet. In a certain sense, his acceptance of Orthodoxy is inseparable

¹ Romanos was born ca. 482 and he died ca. 560. As for Yannai, he is thought to belong to the middle of the sixth century, exactly like Romanos. See E. Fleischer, *The Yoser: Its Emergence and Development* (Jerusalem, 1984), 18.

² On the sociolinguistic implications of the coexistence of Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria, see S. Brock, "Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria," in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, eds., A. Bowman and G. Woolf (Cambridge, 1994), 149–60 (repr. in S. Brock, *From Ephrem to Romanos: Interactions between Syriac and Greek in Late Antiquity* (Ashgate, 1999, I); D. Taylor, "Bilingualism and Diglossia in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia," in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text*, eds., J. Adams, M. Janse and S. Swain (Oxford, 2002), 298–331.

³ Let us remember that in 489 the Syriac blend of Christianity had been condemned by Byzantium. Concretely, this condemnation had been expressed by the closing of the Academy of Edessa.

from his choice of the Greek language. Indeed, both Hellenism and Orthodoxy were part of an indivisible entity that can be globally designated by the term ἑλληνορθόδοξος. Instead of considering Romanos's choice as a default option, it is more interesting to view it as the reflection of his particular social and geographic background. Indeed, his birthplace Emesa (the modern Homs) in Central Syria was triply marginalized. First, it was far away from Constantinople, the center of both Orthodoxy and Hellenism. Second, it was also at a distance from Antioch, the main center of Hellenism in Northern Syria. Lastly, it was quite remote from the northeastern city of Edessa, the cradle of classical Syriac culture. This threefold outsidership may explain why between the three centers, Constantinople, Antioch, and Edessa, Romanos chose the first, that is, the most attractive one in terms of political power and social prestige.

One could almost adopt a post-colonial grid and interpret Romanos's choice of Hellenism and Orthodoxy at the expense of the Syriac linguistic, cultural, and religious identity as the consequence of an inferiority complex quite characteristic of provincial people or colonized nations. This theory accords well with the traditional legend according to which Romanos started his career as a bad poet and as an even worse singer until the Virgin Mary visited him in a dream on Christmas eve. If we read this myth with an euhemeristic spirit, the miraculous transformation of a failed cantor into the major hymnographer of the Byzantine liturgical tradition may convey another significant issue. It could be an metaphorical way of narrating the process by which an oriental Barbarian succeeded in durably imposing his style over the literary horizon of the Metropolis.

Thus, it appears that Romanos's integration into Hellenism was far from being a unilateral process. Indeed, he or the poetic tradition of which he is the main representative was instrumental in the transfer of the tradition of Syriac poetry to the Byzantine world. Both his translations of St. Ephrem's hymns and his original compositions exerted a crucial impact on the subsequent development of Hellenic hymnography. Though written in a relatively high register of Greek, Romanos's hymns display many generic and formal features that can be ascribed to the Oriental cultural context in which both Syriac hymnography and the Jewish school of Hebrew classical *Piyyut* flourished in parallel. However, the gap between the recipient culture and the oriental importation was perhaps lesser than it appears at first sight, since the literary productions written in the local languages of Byzantine-dominated

Near East were still part of the Greek cultural horizon. To some extent, the Hebrew, Judeo-Aramaic, and Syriac literacy that developed as an alternative to the primacy of Hellenism nonetheless integrated many cultural features from the dominant model of Greek civilization.

In this paper, I will try to apply the tools of comparative literature, stylistic analysis, sociolinguistics, and literary pragmatics to reckon with some formal similarities between Romanos and Yannai in their respective rewritings of the Biblical letter. This cross-cultural analysis seeks to document what these two poets have in common in spite of the huge differences, from a religious and linguistic viewpoint, that separated them. Thus, my purpose is not to deal with factual contacts between Jews and Christians in the Byzantine cultural area. Rather, I would like to show how a Greek-speaking Christian of Syrian origin and a Palestinian Jew writing in Hebrew participated in the same linguistic and literary horizon. Within this frame, the Syriac and Hebrew particularistic cultures coexisted, each in its own way and each for its own account, with the allegedly universalistic legacy of Hellenism.⁴

I. ROMANOS THE MELODIST VS. PALESTINIAN PIYYUT: GENERIC AND STYLISTIC CONVERGENCE/DIVERGENCE

At the turning point between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages (fourth to sixth century C.E.), the respective *Sitze im Leben* of the Greek Orthodox, Syriac, or Jewish liturgical hymns were quite similar. Indeed, each of these literary traditions indulged in rewriting significant parts of the Biblical sources in order to enwrap the fixed core of the prayers with the embroidery of liturgical poems. By the end of the Talmudic period (ca. 501 C.E.), the main components of synagogal liturgy had already been crystallized. In Eastern Christianity, the same period witnessed the composition and diffusion of the various versions of the Eucharistic liturgy. Thus, the endeavor to adorn the already established version of the regular prayers with a crown of hymns reflects the same tendency to enhance the religious service with an extra component, more open to the individual innovations

⁴ On the proximity of Greek and Syrian culture in Byzantine Syria, see S. Brock, "From Ephrem to Romanos," *Studia Patristica* XX (1989): 151 (repr. in S. Brock, *From Ephrem to Romanos: Interactions between Syriac and Greek in Late Antiquity* (Ashgate, 1999, IV).

of the hymnographers. In both Judaism and Early Christianity, this hymnographic activity may be considered a lyrical offering, according to the principle expressed in Hosea 14:3: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord."

More specifically, Romanos's prosodic devices are strongly reminiscent of the poetics of both Syriac and Hebrew hymnography. Let us mention for instance the use of isosyllabic and isotonic verses or kola, acrostic,⁵ paronomasia or etymological puns, refrains, and lastly the use of the term "house" (Greek οἶκος, Hebrew *bayit*, Syriac *baitâ*)⁶ to refer to the stanza.⁷ Even the rhyme, an innovation used by Syriac hymnographers and also adopted by Yannai⁸ (but not yet by Yosse ben Yosse who flourished in the fifth century),⁹ is occasionally¹⁰ attested, if not in Romanos,¹¹ at least in the hymns integrated into the poetic tradition to which this author belonged.

As already stated in the introduction, the adoption of the linguistic and cultural standards of the Byzantine center did not exclude the adopted model from also integrating some of the features that were characteristic of Romanos's linguistic and cultural Syrian background. Indeed, the oriental influence recognizable in Romanos's hymnography is something more than a unilateral interference of the Syriac background on a poetic production in Greek. One can speak here of a process of mutual influence by virtue of which the local imitations of Hellenism exerted a reverse impact on their own model. In other

⁵ In the Hebrew *piyyut*, the use of the acrostic as a signature appeared later. However, Hebrew poetry resorted since Biblical times to the alphabetical acrostic. The first Hebrew poet who signed by means of an acrostic is Yannai. See Fleischer, *op. cit.*, 18.

⁶ On this specific value of *baitâ*, see R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 2nd edn., 2 vols., (Oxford, 1879, I), 479.

⁷ It is noteworthy that Italian *stanza* "stanza" and "room" displays the same semantic shift from the realm of architecture to that of poetics. It is thought that *stanza* (or its medieval Latin etymon *stantia*) is a calque translation of Arabic *bait* "house," "strophe." See my paper "Bayt ("House") as 'Strophe' in Hebrew, Byzantine and Near Eastern Poetry," *Le Museon*, 121/ 3-4 (2008): 297-310.

⁸ According to Fleischer, the rhyme is an internal innovation of the sixth-century Hebrew poets. See Fleischer, *op. cit.*, 23-4.

⁹ See A. Mirsky, *Yosse ben Yosse: Poems*, (Jerusalem, 1977), 12-3.

¹⁰ As in the famous Akathistos hymn to the Virgin, which is not by him, even though it is traditionally conceived as part of his corpus. It should be mentioned that the poetry that can be genuinely ascribed to Romanos displays a frequent resort, if not to verse-ending rhymes, at least to internal rhyme (homoeoteleuta and homoeoptota).

¹¹ In Romanos's genuine poems, the rhyme at the end of the verse is attested, but it is far from being systematic.

words, the contribution of Syriac sacred poetry to the emergence of a new blend of Greek hymnody is tantamount to a feedback effect by virtue of which the Hellenic cultural legacy assimilated by the Syriac civilization reintegrated its primeval source. Thus, it is legitimate to speak here of transculturation or ethnoconvergence rather than of one-sided acculturation.

For obvious reasons, Yannai did not exert any impact on the general horizon of Byzantine culture. However, he was certainly influenced by the dialectic of ethnoconvergence that was developing in his time between the Hellenized non-Greek margins of the Empire and the Constantinopolitan or Antiochian centers of Hellenism. He can therefore be considered an interesting counterpart to Romanos and an eloquent illustration of the participation of Byzantine Jews and Greek Christians into the same *Zeitgeist*.

One of the parallelisms between Romanos and Yannai is their common indebtedness to the sophisticated subtleties of Greek rhetoric, albeit in a Hebrew garb in the case of Yannai. The fact that Greek prose rather than Greek poetry was influential in the development of a new poetics in Byzantine-dominated Near East is on its own noteworthy. Actually, the legacy of Greek metrical poetry was difficult to perpetuate in the High Middle Ages, for the traditional verse based on a quantitative pattern was incompatible with such major prosodic transformations like the replacement of pitch by stress and the loss of the vowel quantity. To be sure, some archaizing poets kept alive until Late Antiquity the tradition of composing hexameters or elegiac distichs. However, their learned poetry was first and foremost poetry for the eye, destined for individual reading rather than for the public singing required by worship.

Thus, the only way of combining poetic creativity with a minimal preservation of Hellenic literary patterns was to resort to the prosaic models available in the corpus of the Greek rhetoricians. No doubt, the factor of quantity played a certain role in Greek prose also, especially as far as the clausulae are concerned. However, the art of prose could have provided some other esthetic features that did not involve the factor of vowel quantity and that poets whose prosody was not based on quantitative parameters could have therefore recycled in their verses. Let us mention for instance, the internal rhymes (homoeoteleuta and homoeoptota), the use of the same number of syllables in parallel kola, the mirrored symmetry (chiasm), or the false symmetry. The recycling of prosaic patterns as part of the arsenal of poetic devices—either

within the framework of Greek or through the crossing of interlingual boundaries—is on its own an interesting case of the creation of a new literary genre on the basis of pre-existing forms.

Inasmuch as classical *piyyut* draws most of its inspiration from Biblical poetry, it preserves the basic pattern of parallelism, which plays such an important role in Hebrew poetics. However, the ABAB structure is occasionally replaced by a chiasmatic structure that may be considered a borrowing from the esthetic of Greek rhetoric. An interesting combination of both parallelism and chiasm appears in the following distich by Yannai:

אתה מוריד ומעלה // בורא כל והכל מבלה
גנזי סתרים מגלה // דלים מדלים מדלה

You bring down and up; you create everything and everything you make rot.

You reveal the treasures of the secrets and you draw the indigents from indigence.¹²

The second hemistich of the first verse is structured according to a chiasmatic schema ABBA thanks to the reversal of the sequence verb + direct object in *והכל מבלה* “and everything you make rot.” This derogation of the inherited parallel structure is all the more striking in that the following verse displays the traditional Biblical structure ABAB. The resort to mirrored symmetry is a very timely one, but sufficient to attenuate the monotony of the whole.

Sometimes, the points of encounter between classical *piyyut* and Romanos’s hymnography through the third term constituted by the legacy of Greek rhetoric is less obvious, for the common denominator between both poems is not related to the use of the same trope by both authors. Rather it consists in resorting to different tropes that nonetheless provoke the same effect of breaking symmetry in an unexpected way. The fondness for such destabilizing effects is by itself inherent to the esthetic of Greek rhetoric. In order to illustrate this deep similarity between both blends of poetics, I would like to bring two examples—one from Romanos, another from Yannai.

¹² M. Zulai (ed.), *Piyyute Yannai: Liturgical Poems of Yannai Collected from Geniza-Manuscripts and Other Sources* (Berlin, 1938), 167.

Romanos's *Hymn on Adam and Eve* contains an elegant antithesis¹³ complicated by a false symmetry, as in the best representatives of Atticist style. Let us quote for instance the following two kola describing the forbidden tree of the Garden of Eden:

οὐ κακοῦ μὲν τὴν φύσιν ὑπάρχοντος ἀλλὰ σοι τὴν κάκωσιν παραβάντι
σκευάζοντος.¹⁴

Being not bad by nature, but causing you badness if you transgress.

These two kola are a remarkable illustration of the art of putting in parallel parts of speech that are not really symmetric as far as their syntactic value is concerned. Indeed, the participle ὑπάρχοντος “being” that concludes the first kolon is echoed by the participle σκευάζοντος “causing,” at the end of the second kolon. These homoeoptota apparently share the same active diathesis. Yet, their syntactic status is completely different. On the one hand, ὑπάρχοντος is an intransitive verb serving as a simple copula between the implicit subject ξύλου “tree” and the predicate κακοῦ “bad” of the genitive absolute construction. On the other hand, σκευάζοντος “causing” bears a transitive value. The combination of the morphophonetic similarity between the two kola and the syntactic discrepancy between them is further enhanced by the internal rhyme that unites τὴν φύσιν “by nature” and τὴν κάκωσιν “the badness.” Whereas the first accusative is a complement of relation of the adjective κακοῦ, the second one is a full-fledged direct object of the participle σκευάζοντος. The asymmetry that is hidden beyond the apparent symmetry is also underlined by the etymological pun between κακοῦ “bad” and κάκωσιν “badness.” These cognate words are distinct parts of speech assuming different syntactic functions, each in its respective kolon (κακοῦ as a predicate, κάκωσιν as a direct object). Here also, we recognize the same kind of contrast between the symmetry at the level of the signifier and the asymmetry at the level of the signified.

This subtle manipulation of the interface between the morphological material and the syntactic design has its counterpart in Yannai's poetry. In a *piyyut* related to the pericope *Mi-qets* (Genesis 41:1–44:17), the

¹³ See G. Rowe, “Style,” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C.–A.D. 400*, ed., S. Porter (Leiden, 1997), 142; R. Anderson Jr., *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms* (Leuven, 2000), 21–2.

¹⁴ I, 7, v. 3–4 in Romanos le Mélode, *Hymnes*, ed. J. Grosdidier de Matons (Paris, 1964, I), 78.

Hebrew poet describes in the following terms the difference between the dreams that Joseph had in Canaan¹⁵ and those he interpreted in Egypt:¹⁶

נשנא בחלום אשר לו נפתר נאהב בחלום אשר הוא פתר

Hated because of the dream that was interpreted for him // and beloved because of the dream he interpreted by himself.¹⁷

The four verbs of this verse display a combination of two binary oppositions. On a semantic level, נשנא “hated” is opposed to נאהב “beloved.” Furthermore, the verbs of the relative clauses נפתר “was interpreted” and פתר “he interpreted” contrast from the viewpoint of diathesis, נפתר being a passive and פתר an active. These intertwined oppositions convey a paradoxical *conchetto* in the best tradition of Greek epideictic rhetoric.

This example can also illustrate another interesting feature common to both Yannai and Romanos, namely the ability to unexpectedly subvert the predictability of the text. In Yannai’s above-quoted verse, the sequence of three verbal forms in the *nif’al* scheme is unexpectedly broken by the interruption of the *qal* פתר at the very end of the verse. The fact that פתר is the only active form at the end of a concatenation of four words provokes an effect of focalization. Moreover, it is perhaps a way of suggesting that after having been the passive victim of the circumstances, Joseph starts to actively master his own destiny.

This play between repetition and variation as well as between predictability and unpredictability may also be illustrated by the following example taken from Romanos:

ὁ πανταχοῦ παρὼν καὶ κρατῶν πάντων

Present everywhere and ruling over everything.¹⁸

Beyond the chiasm structure uniting the adverb πανταχοῦ “everywhere” and its etymological correlate πάντων “over everything” as well as the two homoeoptota participles παρὼν and κρατῶν,¹⁹ the almost

¹⁵ Genesis 37:5–11.

¹⁶ Ibid., 40:5–41:36.

¹⁷ Zulay, *op. cit.*, 56.

¹⁸ XV, 16, v. 6 in Romanos le Mélode, *Hymnes*, II, 222.

¹⁹ At the time of Romanos, the special prosodic value of the perispomene was completely lost, so that -ὄν and -ῶν were perfectly homophone.

perfect mirrored symmetry is broken by three irregularities. The first term of the chiasm πανταχοῦ ends with -οῦ, unlike the three remaining terms which all end with -ων/-ών. The third term κρατῶν starts with κ- unlike the three remaining terms which all start with π-. Finally, the last term πάντων is paroxytonic unlike the first three that are all oxytonic. This deliberately limping symmetry consisting in an opposition of three terms vs. one isolated term is reminiscent in its inner structure of Yannai's above-mentioned verse where the monotone uniformity is unexpectedly broken by the appearance of a *qal* form after three consecutive *nif'al* forms. In both cases, the poets magisterially played with the subtle balance between repetition and variation, combining symmetry and asymmetry in a creative way. As in the above-quoted verse of Yannai, where the irruption of the active פתר allowed one to focus on its special semantic value, the word παρὼν is the only of the four terms of the verse that does not break the symmetry. Indeed, it ends by -ών, it starts with π-, and it is oxytonic. The accumulation of all three criteria on which the three-fold formal opposition between the four semantic words of the verse is based bestows on παρὼν the status of a pivotal word on which all the attention is focused. It is perhaps not fortuitous that in this hymn treating of the Nativity, the focus falls precisely on a word that is etymologically related to the παρουσία, not taken here as a reference to the Second Coming, but rather as a designation of the First Advent of Jesus Christ.

Thus, the above-quoted sources are shaped according to a *trompe l'œil* pattern that confers a special focus on a keyword of the verse. This refinement is most probably inherited from the legacy of Greek rhetoric, more specifically from the Second Sophistic, whose last marking representative was precisely the Syrian Libanius. Interestingly enough, two hymnographers, whose languages and civilizations both belonged to the Near Eastern context,²⁰ can be compared to each other by virtue of their common participation in the cultural legacy of Hellenism rather than because they stood in direct contact with each other.

The commitment to the patterns of classical or neo-classical rhetoric goes beyond the resort to formal devices. It can also involve the content itself, inasmuch as some of the figures are tropes of thought rather than tropes of words. One of them is the synoeciosis (συνουκείωσις),

²⁰ At least if we consider the Syriac language and culture to be part of the broader framework of Aramaic language and culture.

where the point of the opponent is recycled by virtue of an *a fortiori* reasoning to the advantage of the speaker.²¹ A good example of such a pattern is provided by Yannai's hymn on Moses's death. This *piyyut* starts with the reproach that the poet addresses to God through a dialectical rewording of Ezechiel 33:11:

במות רשע לא תחפוץ ובמות צדיק איך תחפוץ

If you do not desire the death of the wicked, how can you desire the death of the just?²²

To be sure, the use that Yannai made of this figure of thought is similar to the rule of *qal va-ḥomer*, one of the thirteenth measures by which the Torah is interpreted. However, this rabbinical *a fortiori* reasoning may itself be considered as resulting from the impact of Hellenistic dialectic on the way of relating to the sacred text. Moreover, it is noteworthy that in Yannai's poem, the *qal va-ḥomer* device is not used in the usual way, that is, as a tool in the scholarly debate about the meaning of the text. Instead, it is part of a reproach the lyrical 'I' of the poet addresses to divine justice. Thus, the figure of *qal va-ḥomer* that has been recycled from the arsenal of Greek rhetoric to the study of Torah is here closer to the original pattern of συνοικείωσις. Indeed, it has retained its primeval pragmatic value as a mean of arguing with the adversary in the tribunal. The only difference consists in the fact that here human justice has been replaced by theodicy.

II. FROM PARATEXT TO TEXT: THE RESPECTIVE PRAGMATIC STATUS OF ROMANOS'S AND YANNAI'S HYMNS

At first sight, the Byzantine poet and his Jewish contemporary are united by their indebtedness to the Biblical text, which they take as a major source of thematic inspiration. Yannai and Romanos select some marking episodes of the Holy Writ and enhance them through a series of hymns, each one of them focusing on a specific idea. In both cases, the relationship of the poetic remaking of the Biblical verse is often mediated by the homiletic text developed in each of the respective cultures: the Midrashim of the Palestinian rabbis, the homilies of the Greek Church Fathers. The fact that in Yannai's manuscripts found

²¹ See Rowe, *op. cit.*, 145–6.

²² Zulai, *op. cit.*, 254.

in the Genizah, the formulation of the hymns is often corroborated by Biblical quotations introduced by ככתוב “as it is written...” or ונאמר “and it is said...” allows one to consider the poem as a full-fledged commentary of the Torah. As in Talmudic and Midrashic literature, these introductory formulas introduce the *loci probantes* wherefrom the paratext draws its authority. The affinity between hymnody and homily in the Byzantine-dominated Near East is further corroborated by the term *madrāshā* by which the Syriac poetic tradition refers to the stanzaic form of the sacred hymn. From a morphophonetic viewpoint *madrāshā* is the exact equivalent of Hebrew *midrash*, the term by which Jewish tradition designates the genre of jurisprudential or homiletic commentary.

However, beyond the similarity between Romanos’s and Yannai’s *Sitze im Leben* in their respective cultural horizon, one should not neglect an important generic-pragmatic difference between Romanos’s hymnody and the Hebrew *piyyut* of Byzantine Palestine. Whereas Yannai follows the Pentateuch pericope after pericope (according to the triennial division that was specific to Palestinian Judaism), Romanos skips through the Old and New Testaments, choosing only those stories where he can indulge in typological or moralistic interpretations. Yet, as far as these highlighted parts of the commented text are concerned, Romanos’s rewriting is far more exhaustive and linear than that of Yannai. The Hebrew poet usually selects only one idea of the lemma, usually the first verse of a pericope or of an episode.²³ Moreover, there is a difference between the way Yannai relies on the formulation of the Hebrew text of the Bible and Romanos’s relationship to the LXX text. Most of Yannai’s verses are original creations rather than an embedding of Biblical phrases. This relative freedom towards the model is occasionally compensated by the insertion of refrains that consist of whole Biblical verses quoted as such. As for Romanos, he does quote the Holy Writ, but not verbatim. Most of the time, he tries to upgrade stylistically the rather clumsy formulation of the LXX by substituting certain words by their more sophisticated synonyms or by adopting a word order that is more elastic than the relatively rigid syntax of Biblical Greek.

²³ About this technique, see Fleischer, *op. cit.*, 20–1.

An example of this poetic rewriting that is tantamount to an intralingual translation is provided by the *Hymn on the sacrifice of Abraham*. There, the verse of Genesis 22:2

λαβὲ τὸν υἱόν σου τὸν ἀγαπητόν, ὃν ἠγάπησας, τὸν Ἰσαάκ, καὶ πορεύθητι εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν ὑψηλὴν καὶ ἀνένεγκον αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ εἰς ὀλοκάρπωσιν...

Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the high land. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering,

is reworded as such:

Λάβε παῖδα τὸν ἐκ τῶν σῶν λαγόνων, ὅπερ ἐν γήρει ἔσχει παραμύθιον καὶ σφάξον μοι²⁴ "Take your son, the one from your flesh, whom you received in your old age as a solace, and slaughter to me."

Romanos took over the basic word order of the verse and introduced formal changes that smooth out the style. Instead of the Hebraism consisting in the repetition of the article before the noun and the adjective, he uses the article only once before the determination ἐκ τῶν σῶν λαγόνων "from your flesh." By itself, this syntactic structure may be viewed as a rule-breaking inversion of the expected prosaic construction τὸν ἐκ τῶν σῶν λαγόνων παῖδα "the son (that is) from your flesh" Another touch of refinement is the use of the predicate παραμύθιον "as a solace" as a hyperbaton at the end of the relative clause. Lastly, the replacement of the Biblical phrasing ἀνένεγκον αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ εἰς ὀλοκάρπωσιν "bring him there as a burnt offering" by σφάξον μοι "slaughter to me" enhances the expressiveness of the formulation. Unlike the periphrase ἀνένεγκον αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ εἰς ὀλοκάρπωσιν "bring him there as a burnt offering" that focuses on the dimension of worship involved in the sacrifice, the use of σφάξον "slaughter" stresses in all its crudity the concrete nature of the act, that is accomplished, as it were, without any religious framework. As for the deliberate dropping of the direct object, it may be explained either by a euphemism or by the fact that the audience already knows that the ram will be slaughtered instead of Isaac. This last example shows that Romanos's rewording of the Biblical letter does not necessarily function as a *klassische Dämpfung* of the clumsy formulation of the Holy Writ. Sometimes, it can condense in a striking way the periphrastic/euphemistic phrasing of the source. One can measure here the margin of innovation Romanos allows to himself in his relationship to the Bible. In

²⁴ III, 2, v. 4–5 in Romanos le Mélode, *Hymnes*, I, 140.

spite of these differences in the way of relying on the formulation of the Biblical letter, the purpose of creating a poetic paratext to the Holy Scripture is common to Hebrew *Piyyut* and to Romanos. Furthermore, in each case, the paratext of the Bible has been inserted in the respective liturgies of rabbinical Judaism and Byzantine Orthodoxy. Yannai's *qerobot* were supposed to be recited during the repetition of the 'Amidah, immediately before the *qedushah*.²⁵ As for Romanos's hymns, they are not part of the Eucharistic service *stricto sensu*. Nonetheless, they belong to the liturgy in a broader sense, inasmuch as each of the cycles related to specific characters is supposed to be publicly recited at Matins or Vespers during Lent or after Easter or at the day in which the main character of the hymn is celebrated. Lastly, it is noteworthy that both Yannai's *piyyutim* and Romanos's hymns seem to have been performed in an antiphonic way. Indeed, the assembly probably repeated the refrain marking the end of each stanza.

Considered from the viewpoint of their respective sources of inspiration—the Hebrew Bible on the one hand, the LXX on the other—the classical *piyyut* and Romanos's hymnography may share some common features. If we turn now to the ontological-pragmatic status of these poetic rewordings of the Bible, significant differences appear between them. Whereas Romanos verses function as a lengthy homily that draws on the morality of the scriptural narrative for an edification purpose, the Classical *piyyut* is a rewriting in the form of densely formulated lyrical verses where the message is less important than the formal design. In other words, Romanos decodes the text to make it available to a human public. On the contrary, Palestinian *piyyut* encodes the poem and transforms it into a tool of communication with the divine realm constituted by God and His angelic retinue.

This fundamental difference between Romanos's decoding and Yannai's encoding overlaps with the distinction between didactic poetry and genuine lyric. Moreover, the location of Yannai's *qerobot* and Romanos's *kondakia* within their respective liturgical framework corroborates the impression that in the former case, the poetic word is extremely dense, whereas in the latter case, the sacred poetry appears

²⁵ On the exact location of Yannai's hymns within the repetition of the 'Amidah, see I. Davidson, *Mahzor Yannai: A Liturgical Work of the VIIth Century* (New York, 1919), xxvi–xxxiv.

most of the time as a long sequence of diluted arguties. As we just mentioned, Yannai's *qerobot* preceded the recitation of the *qedushah*, the most solemn and intense moment of Jewish prayer in general and of the 'Amidah in particular. On the other hand, Romanos's hymns are recited during Vesper or Matins, that is, during an office that is no more than a preparation toward the Eucharistic service. Lastly, there is an interesting difference between Yannai's hymns and Romanos's *kondakia* as far as their respective literary reception is concerned. Apart from the *qerobah* אֲוֹנֵי פֶטֶרִי רַחֲמֵימַי and other *piyyutim* of doubtful attribution preserved in the Ashkenazic tradition, Yannai's poems are known only because they have been discovered in the Cairo Genizah. This occultation is due among other factors to the rivalry between the Palestinian tradition and the Babylonian one. Since the latter succeeded in imposing its Talmud and its annual cycle of pericopes over the entire Jewish world, Yannai's huge literary production, which was organically related to the triennial cycle of Torah reading, became obsolete. On the contrary, Romanos's hymnodic production was universally accepted by Greek Orthodox liturgical tradition. Moreover, it was translated into Church Slavonic, which endowed it with a widespread diffusion among those of the Slavs who embraced Eastern Christianity.²⁶ When some Orthodox nations developed the liturgical use of their ethnic languages, as in Wallachia and Moldavia by the end of the seventeenth century, Romanos's hymns were also translated into these new liturgical tongues. The contrast between the gradual occultation of Yannai's hymns and the spreading of Romanos's *kondakia* throughout the Orthodox world may cause the impression that Yannai's poetic production constitutes a dead end from the viewpoint of the history of literature. However, Yannai's poetics had at least the merit of serving as a model for later representatives of Palestinian *piyyut*, especially Eleazar ben Ha-Kallir. In its turn, the sacred poetry of the latter was instrumental in the crystallization of the hymnographic schools that developed in ninth to tenth-century Italy and later on in Ashkenaz from the end of the eleventh century.²⁷ It would

²⁶ The name 'Ρωμανὸς Μελωδὸς has been translated as *Roman Sladkopevec* "Roman the sweet singer" in Church Slavonic. This rendering probably displays the interference of the designation of David in 2 Samuel 23:1 (LXX: II Kings 23:2), that is, "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (ὁ γλυκὺς ψαλμοῦδὸς τοῦ Ἰσραηλ).

²⁷ On the *translatio studii* that brought the Palestinian lore of Classical *Piyyut* from Palestine to Italy and from Italy to Germany, see Flesicher, op. cit., 607–16.

be interesting to examine to what extent the legacy of Hellenic rhetoric attested in Yannai's Hebrew hymns and in Romanos's *kondakia* managed to survive throughout the development of Classical *Piyyut* from the seventh to thirteenth century, as well as in the translation of Byzantine hymnody into Eastern European languages.

III. CONCLUSION

If we try to draw a balance of the convergence vs. divergence between Yannai's hymnody and Romanos's one, it appears that the similarities are more obvious at the level of formal analysis. Once we address the question of the pragmatic-ontological status of these poetic rewordings of the Biblical letter, significant differences appear. This discrepancy between the conclusions of the formal analysis and the considerations that arose from a pragmatic-ontological inquiry ought to be meditated. It may reveal that the adoption of Hellenic rhetoric patterns by a Hebrew hymnographer is absolutely independent from the contents and the ideas conveyed by the poems. After all, there is no total adequation between Hellenism and Christian identity. The recuperation of the legacy of Hellenic culture by the Fathers of the Greek Church does not obliterate that until the end of the Second Sophistic, at least, Hellenism was rather associated with the pagan lore, as shown by the use of "Ἕλληνες to refer to the pagans. At the time of Yannai's and Romanos's *floruit* in the first half of the sixth century, the Christianizing of Greek *paideia* was still a recent event, which left open the possibility of borrowing the tools of Greek rhetoric without giving the impression of being committed to Christianity. Thus, Yannai felt confident enough to adapt to Hebrew poetry the refined *concelli* and tropes of Greek rhetoric in order to upgrade the poetic patterns inherited from Yosse ben Yosse.

What we have tried to reconstruct in this paper is not so much a common *Zeitgeist*, as a pool of formal refinements shared by both Romanos and Yannai. Indeed, the concept of *Zeitgeist* is perhaps too abstract and ideological in comparison with the outmost concrete and technical aspects involved by the points of encounter between both hymnographers. Rather than of a transfer of ideas, one should speak here of a transfer of technologies. Obviously, this transfer did not pass directly from Yannai to Romanos nor vice versa, but through the mediation of the legacy of Greek rhetoric. Needless to say, the resort to

rhetoric devices does not necessarily mean that Romanos's or Yannai's poetry is just rhetorical. The acclimatization of these borrowed patterns to another language (in the case of Yannai and the Syriac hymnographers) or to another literary genre (in the case of Romanos) was responsible for the change of status of the rhetoric ornaments. From simple prosaic tropes they became an integral part of the architecture of the new poetic forms. The lead of rhetoric was transubstantiated into the gold of lyrical poetry by virtue of the alchemy of the cross-cultural exchanges.

EARLY HALAKHIC LITERATURE

Hillel I. Newman

Halakhic literature stands in a state of tension between the poles of the two major centers of Rabbinic activity and learning, Palestine and Babylonia, from the inception of the two *Talmudim* well into the Middle Ages. The Palestinian (or "Jerusalem") Talmud itself reached its final form among Jews living under Byzantine rule. Little remains of the halakhic works produced thereafter by the Jews of Byzantine Palestine over a period of two hundred years or more until the Muslim conquest, but such sources as survive are all the more valuable for the light they shed not only on the history of halakha but also on the social history of the Jews in a period that is in general poorly documented. Though halakhic activity in Palestine did not cease under Islam, our survey is devoted specifically to the literature of Jews under Byzantine rule, thus for the period from the Muslim conquest until the end of the tenth century we shall turn to Europe, and in particular to southern Italy, where the Palestinian tradition continued to exert its influence and whence it spread farther north to the German Jewish communities of Ashkenaz.

I. THE PALESTINIAN TALMUD AND BYZANTIUM

The dating of rabbinic literature is notoriously difficult: the works are mostly corporate creations, chronologically stratified and vigorously redacted, arising in a milieu of oral composition. The primary chronological indicators are the named sages for whom a relative chronology can be established and occasional allusions to historical events or persons which can be dated absolutely. In the case of the Palestinian Talmud, the latest historical event recorded is commonly thought to be the ill-fated Persian campaign of Julian in 363 (PT Nedarim 3:2, 37d; PT Shevuot 3:9, 34d). In fact, other passages may be dated with confidence to the eighties of the fourth century—and perhaps even later. For example, PT Sanhedrin 10:6, 21b, alludes to a Roman official named Proclus, whose visit to Sepphoris caused such consternation

that Rabbi Mana instructed the local bakers to bake bread for him, at the price of violating the Sabbath (or Passover). Proclus should be identified with the governor of Palestine of the same name, who was appointed to that position c. 380, after which he proceeded to climb the administrative ladder until becoming *praefectus urbi Constantinopolis* (388–392).¹ The chronology and circumstances of the final redaction of the Palestinian Talmud remain a matter of speculation, but scholars generally assume that this took place in the late fourth or early fifth century, marking the end of the amoraic period in Palestine. Many assume that amoraic activity came to an end due to persecution of the Jews under the Theodosian emperors.² This is a plausible explanation, though lacking in direct evidence. On the other hand, the hypothesis that the termination of the Jewish patriarchate some time between 415 and 429 resulted in the redaction of the Palestinian Talmud is less convincing. The later patriarchs were increasingly removed from the rabbinic world and its academies, and the last members of the dynasty are strikingly absent from rabbinic works; it is unlikely that the extinction of the institution should have had such a dramatic effect on the activity of the *amoraim*. Circumstantial evidence suggests other factors: it is possible that the waves of foreign invasion which disrupted life in Palestine in the late fourth and early fifth centuries contributed to the termination of the academic process which produced the Palestinian Talmud.³

Though the completion of the Palestinian Talmud may rightfully be assigned to the Byzantine period, the text is frustratingly spare in explicit references to those events and transformations of the fourth-century Roman world which loom so large in our own historiographical

¹ On Proclus see R. Delmaire, *Les responsables des finances impériales au Bas-Empire romain (iv^e–vi^e s.)* (Bruxelles, 1989), 104–8 (esp. p. 105). I discuss the circumstances of this event and analyze other chronological data in a forthcoming paper, “The Problem of Dating the Redaction of the Palestinian Talmud” (in Hebrew).

² For a survey of scholarly opinion see G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Edinburgh, 1996^b), 169–71. On the Palestinian Talmud in general see L. Moskowitz, “The Formation and Character of the Jerusalem Talmud,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. 4, ed., S. Katz (Cambridge, 2006), 663–77.

³ For discussion see H. Newman, *Jerome and the Jews* (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997), 13–24 (Hebrew). On the possible effects of demographic decline in areas of Jewish settlement in the fourth century see U. Leibner, “Settlement Patterns in the Eastern Galilee: Implications Regarding the Transformation of Rabbinic Culture in Late Antiquity,” in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*, eds., L. Levine and D. Schwartz (Tübingen, 2009), 269–95.

perspective. One searches in vain for Constantine and his successors (with the exception of Julian) and for testimony to the ascent of Christianity. Were we dependent solely on this work, we would have no notion of the most distinctive phenomena of Palestinian Christianity in the fourth century: the re-invention of Jerusalem as a Christian city, the emergence of Holy Land pilgrimage, and the establishment of monasticism. Attempts to uncover a manifestly Byzantine context, either in a putative overarching program of religious debate⁴ or in allegedly meaningful formal analogies between the Talmud and Justinian's *Digesta*,⁵ have not proven particularly successful. The indifference of the Talmud towards what we deem most important is a fact which warrants our attention, but if we insist on taking the measure of all things only by what appear in our own eyes to be the cardinal issues of the age, we beg the question. Perhaps the problem itself needs to be reframed.

II. THE MA'ASIM LI-VNEI ERETZ YISRAEL⁶

The closure of the Palestinian Talmud did not mark the end of halakhic literary activity in Byzantine Palestine, though that which followed was inferior in both scope and conceptual innovation to the classical works of the *tannaim* and *amoraim*. With few exceptions, the authors and

⁴ See for example J. Neusner, *Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine: History, Messiah, Israel, and the Initial Confrontation* (Chicago, 1987). Cf. the critique of M. Goodman, "Palestinian Rabbis and the Conversion of Constantine to Christianity," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, Vol. 2, eds., P. Schäfer and C. Hezser (Tübingen, 2000), 1–9. See also A. Schremer, "The Christianization of the Roman Empire and Rabbinic Literature," in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*, eds., L. Levine and D. Schwartz (Tübingen, 2009), 349–66.

⁵ See C. Hezser, "The Codification of Legal Knowledge in Late Antiquity: The Talmud Yerushalmi and Roman Law Codes," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, Vol. 1, ed., P. Schäfer (Tübingen, 1998), 581–641. Many of the similarities are typical of legal texts in general or are simply trivial. Hezser herself doubts any direct connection between the two sources and in fact assumes that the Palestinian Talmud preceded the *Digesta*, though her proposed chronology is still inordinately late. Furthermore, her assumptions concerning the use of written sources in the process of redaction are highly overstated. On the orality of rabbinic literature see especially Y. Sussmann, "'Oral Torah' Plain and Simple," in *Talmudic Studies* Vol. 3, eds., Y. Sussmann and D. Rosenthal (Jerusalem, 2005), 209–384 (Hebrew).

⁶ The entire topic is treated in detail in H. Newman, *The Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael: Halakha and History in Byzantine Palestine* (forthcoming, Yad Ben-Zvi Press, Jerusalem [Hebrew]).

editors of later works hid behind a veil of anonymity. We can only speculate on the cause of this phenomenon, which perhaps reflects the authors' own sense of post-classical identity and of subordination to the named luminaries of earlier generations. The absence of named and identifiable Sages also complicates the problem of dating these compositions, forcing us to depend upon other kinds of data to establish chronology.

The outstanding example of post-amoraic halakhic literature from Palestine is the collection (or collections) known as the *Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael*—"The Rulings⁷ of the People of the Land of Israel." The remains of the *Ma'asim* are so fragmented and the sources containing them so diverse, that some have suggested that there never was a single book of *Ma'asim*; they suppose instead that various collections of *Ma'asim* literature were in circulation.⁸ Yet for all that, the surviving material appears to reflect a coherent context of time and place. Because of their importance for an appreciation of Palestinian Judaism under Byzantine rule and because they are relatively unknown outside the circle of talmudic scholarship, they merit a detailed discussion.

The *Ma'asim* largely, though not exclusively, take the form of brief halakhic responsa, and there is little apparent order in the sequence of topics addressed. This implies that the issues raised come from the fabric of daily life and should be of special interest to the social historian, even though in their present form the passages have clearly been reworked by their editors and some may even be editorial contrivances—as is occasionally the case with halakhic responsa in general. It has been suggested that the *Ma'asim* are no less than gleanings from the protocols of the "Sanhedrin" in Tiberias, but our knowledge of the existence and nature of that institution in the Byzantine and early Muslim periods is spotty at best and is insufficient to support such a claim. There is no doubt, however, that the *Ma'asim* are of Palestinian provenance: this is manifest not only in their name (for the source, see below), but also in their language—Palestinian Hebrew—and in the Palestinian orientation of their halakhic rulings. In those matters where we can identify a difference of opinion between the halakhic

⁷ On this sense of *ma'ase* see S. Lieberman, *Studies in Palestinian Talmudic Literature* (Jerusalem, 1991), 277–9 (Hebrew).

⁸ Y. Sussmann, "A Halakhic Inscription from the Beth Shean Valley," *Tarbiz* 43 (1974): 144 (Hebrew); M. Friedman, "Marriage Laws in the Wake of the *Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael*," *Tarbiz* 50 (1981): 210–1 (Hebrew).

traditions of Palestine and Babylonia, the *Ma'asim* always favor the former.⁹

The first modern scholar to take note of the existence of the *Ma'asim* was S. J. Rapoport, who drew attention to a passage in *Sefer Ha-makhria'*, by the thirteenth-century Italian scholar, R. Isaiah di Trani the Elder. The latter, remarking upon the source of an obscure halakha in *Halakhot Gedolot* of R. Simeon Kayyara, quoted a responsum of the eleventh-century Babylonian Gaon, R. Hai: "We do not know whence R. Simeon copied these matters, but we have heard that they were found in the *Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael*, and he copied them from there."¹⁰ The halakha in question, concerning the impurity of wine or oil contaminated by a mouse or other creeping thing, apparently derives indirectly from a passage in the Palestinian Talmud, and Rapoport surmised that R. Simeon Kayyara must have been familiar with a Palestinian book of "deeds" (*ma'asim*) which was in some way dependent upon that Talmud.¹¹ *Halakhot Gedolot*, written in the ninth century, marks one chronological boundary for dating the *Ma'asim*. Grätz pointed to another allusion to them in a different geonic work from Babylonia, *Seder Tannaim Ve-amoraim*. After referring to the Sages nominally associated with the closing of the Mishna, the formation of the Babylonian Talmud, and the period of the *savoraim*, *Seder Tannaim Ve-amoraim* adds enigmatically: "R. Jonathan, the end of *ma'ase*."¹² Grätz argued that in context *ma'ase* must refer to a halakhic work, which he identified with the *Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael* known to R. Simeon Kayyara. Though his theory that the *Ma'asim* are none other than the so-called Minor Tractates is unfounded, he plausibly argued that *Seder Tannaim Ve-amoraim* implies a date for the *Ma'asim* close to those given for the *savoraim* and suggested that they were composed between 550 and 650.¹³ Of the mysterious R. Jonathan and the role he played in the closure of the *Ma'asim*, we know nothing beyond what we find in this one brief passage.

⁹ In a posthumously published note, Ta-Shma argued that the *Ma'asim* originated in Byzantium some time between the eighth and tenth centuries. See I. Ta-Shma, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, Vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 2005), 255–8 (Hebrew). For a response see Newman, *Ma'asim*, chapter 3.

¹⁰ *Sefer Ha-makhria'*, c. 36, ed. S. Wertheimer, 213.

¹¹ S. Rapoport, "The Life of Rabbenu Nissim," *Toledot*, Vol. 2 (Warsaw, 1913), 90 (Hebrew).

¹² *Seder Tannaim Ve-amoraim*, ed. K. Kahan, 10: ור' יונתן סוף מעשה

¹³ H. Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden*, Vol. 5 (Leipzig, 1909), 20, 403.

The discovery of the Cairo Geniza marked the beginning of a new chapter in the study of the *Ma'asim*. Trawling the Geniza for remains of geonic literature, B. M. Lewin came across several manuscript fragments containing *halakhot* of an unknown variety. Their Hebrew and their halakha were Palestinian, and they were distinguished by repeated use of the phrase *kakh ha-ma'ase* ("this is the ruling") to introduce the answers to questions posed. Lewin concluded that these were portions of the lost *Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael*. Searching for the same formula in geonic and later medieval literature, he discovered several clusters of such *halakhot* not attested in the Geniza material.¹⁴ In short order, other scholars published additional Geniza fragments containing the phrase *kakh ha-ma'ase* or *kakh hu ha-ma'ase*; in some manuscripts these *halakhot* were marked with the heading *ma'ase*. At the same time, speculation over the presence of vestiges of other *Ma'asim* in medieval literature was rife, as scholars broadened their criteria for identification, usually with insufficient reason.¹⁵

As the quantity of material attributed to the *Ma'asim* has grown, so has the problem of defining the boundaries of the corpus. While certain sources—mainly those defined by the formal criteria mentioned above—enjoy scholarly consensus, the status of many others is disputed. This is especially true of passages adjacent to but distinct from those more readily identified in the manuscripts. As a result, scholarly discussion is often plagued inadvertently by conflicting assumptions over the scope of the corpus. In the remarks which follow, I have taken a minimalist position with regard to the problem of identification.¹⁶ Special mention should be made of a group of manuscripts which contain Palestinian *halakhot* incorporating material from the *Ma'asim* but

¹⁴ B. Lewin, "Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael," *Tarbiz* 1/1 (1930): 79–101 (Hebrew).

¹⁵ J. Epstein, "Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael," *Tarbiz* 1/2 (1930): 33–42; J. Mann, "Sefer ha-ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael," *Tarbiz* 1/3 (1930): 1–14; J. Epstein, "Teachings of the Land of Israel," *Tarbiz* 2 (1930): 308–27; B. Lewin, "From the Geniza Fragments," *Tarbiz* 2 (1931): 383–410; Z. Rabinovitz, "Sefer ha-ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael," *Tarbiz* 41 (1972): 275–305; M. Margalio, *Halakhot of the Land of Israel from the Geniza* (Jerusalem, 1973) (esp. pp. 39–55); M. Friedman, "Two Fragments from Sefer ha-ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael," *Sinai* 74 (1974): 14–36; idem, "'Ma'ase gadol': A New Fragment from the Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael," *Tarbiz* 51 (1982): 193–205. All of these publications are in Hebrew.

¹⁶ The edition of the text in Newman, *Ma'asim*, contains seventy-three different passages, not counting parallel sources. The majority are attested only in Geniza manuscripts; the rest have been culled from collections of geonic responsa and other medieval halakhic sources.

not sharing their formal characteristics. These seem to be later adaptations of the primary texts, though it is difficult to say when they were composed.¹⁷

As more texts have surfaced, Grätz's hypothesis of a late sixth- or early seventh-century date for the compilation of the *Ma'asim* has come to appear increasingly likely. Various scholars have observed that the relative abundance of Greek words, including several unattested in earlier rabbinic literature, suggests a pre-Muslim date. This is not to deny the continued use of Greek as an administrative language in Palestine until the beginning of the eighth century or as a literary language among Christian authors until the beginning of the ninth.¹⁸ Yet there are a number of indications that Byzantine rule was still in place at the time of the formulation of these *halakhot*, while there is no compelling positive evidence for a Muslim dating.

Let us examine some examples of Greek in the *Ma'asim*. In a Geniza manuscript published by Lewin we read of "someone who went abroad (לְאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן = ξένια) and committed evil deeds, and was apprehended by the authority of the governor (or: government), and stood in קִינְדִּינוֹן (= κίνδυνος), and was tortured in the פְּרוּדוֹס (= πρόδοος), and confessed his name, and the name of his town was such and such, and he was tortured and died."¹⁹ Lieberman has suggested that κίνδυνος should be read here as a Greek calque of the Latin *periculum*, in its legal sense of "trial" or "punishment." Furthermore, he demonstrated that from the fifth century on πρόδοος is used to describe judicial cross-examination by means of torture.²⁰

¹⁷ See Friedman, "Marriage Laws," 209–42.

¹⁸ See for example: P.-L. Gatier, "Les inscriptions grecques d'époque islamique (VII^e–VIII^e siècles) en Syrie du Sud," in *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam, VII^e–VIII^e siècles*, eds., P. Canivet and J.-P. Rey Coquais (Damascus, 1992), 145–57; L. Di Segni, "Greek Inscriptions in Transition from the Byzantine to the Early Islamic period," in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, eds., H. Cotton, R. Hoyland, J. Price and D. Wasserstein (Cambridge, 2009), 352–73; S. Griffith, "Greek into Arabic: Life and Letters in the Monasteries of Palestine in the Ninth Century: The Example of the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*," *Byzantion* 56 (1986): 117–38.

¹⁹ Lewin, "*Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael*," 93 (= no. 9 in Newman, *Ma'asim*). The translation given here incorporates several emendations to the text. The halakhic issue at stake in this instance is whether a single gentile's testimony is sufficient to establish the death of the Jew and thereby enable his wife to remarry.

²⁰ S. Lieberman, *Texts and Studies* (New York, 1974), 18–19, 95–100. By the seventh century the word is found in Syriac in the same sense.

Several *Ma'asim* deal with the formulation of legal documents. In one partially corrupt passage we read of the status of a testament (דייִתיקי = διαθήκη) containing the term אִידִיִּתְמִין, i.e., διεθέμην—"I have bequeathed."²¹ The term itself is found in earlier rabbinic sources. In Greek papyri it is attested from the second to sixth centuries C.E.²²

Another text defines the competing rights of a widow and of offspring to the property of the deceased. If the heirs choose to let the widow remain in the home of the deceased, they are instructed to prepare גְּנִיסִיסִים of the property to prevent it being squandered by her.²³ As Méléze-Modrzejewski has suggested, גְּנִיסִיסִים should be read as a Hebrew transcription of Greek γῶσις, in the sense of "inventory."²⁴ This usage is found in the Greek papyri by the fifth century C.E.; it also made its way into Syriac. The practice itself is not found in earlier rabbinic sources. By way of comparison, let us note that in 531 Justinian legislated that heirs could limit the claims made on their inheritance by creditors of the deceased if they prepared an inventory of property within thirty days of the day of death.²⁵ The law of Justinian does not describe circumstances identical to those of the *Ma'asim*, but it is suggestive of possible external influence on Jewish legal practice regarding inheritance.

Elsewhere we find the *Ma'asim* addressing the issue of a gentile who chooses, in a dispute with a Jew, to turn to a Jewish court for judgment. The judges are instructed in such a case to obtain an arbitration agreement (קופרוסימא = *compromissum*) from the gentile.²⁶ The insistence on an arbitration agreement probably reflects the limited authority of Jewish judges from the perspective of Byzantine law. In 398 Jewish judges were reduced to the status of arbitrators by imperial legislation, and litigants were required to sign a *compromissum*.²⁷

²¹ Epstein, "Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael," 42 (= no. 39 in Newman, *Ma'asim*).

²² To the best of my knowledge, the latest published document containing the term is P. Cair. Masp. 67151, dated 570 C.E.

²³ Mann, "Sefer ha-ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael," 9–10 (= no. 31 in Newman, *Ma'asim*).

²⁴ Additional note by J. Méléze-Modrzejewski in D. Sperber, *A Dictionary of Greek and Latin Legal Terms in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat-Gan, 1984), 210.

²⁵ Codex Iustinianus 6.30.22.

²⁶ Mann, "Sefer ha-ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael," 8 (= no. 28 in Newman, *Ma'asim*).

²⁷ Codex Theodosianus 2.1.10. See O. Irshai, "An Apostate as Heir in Geonic Responsa—Foundations of a Legal Ruling and Its Parallels in Gentile Law," *Shenaton ha-mishpat ha-ivri*, 11–12 (1984–1986), 450 n. 43 (Hebrew).

There is some uncertainty concerning the identity of these litigants: would the authority of the judges as arbitrators be recognized only in disputes between Jews, or also between Jews and gentiles? By the time of Justinian, the law stated expressly that only Jews could turn to Jewish judges for arbitration.²⁸ The ruling of the *Ma'asim* implies that the legal standing of Jewish judges was subject to certain changes not fully reflected in surviving Byzantine legal sources.²⁹ At any rate, it is noteworthy that only in a dispute involving a gentile is a *compromissum* required. Presumably in disputes between Jews the judge's authority was generally unchallenged, regardless of his status in Byzantine law.

The *Ma'asim* state that "a document issued without the ὑπατεία (האיפטיאה) or a date or which is unsigned is invalid."³⁰ The consulate (ὑπατεία) served as a standard for dating Roman documents for hundreds of years, and though the institution was for all intents and purposes obsolete after 541 (the year of the consulate of Basilius), documents continued to be dated μετὰ τὴν ὑπατείαν (*post-consulatum*), first from the consulate of Basilius, then according to the regnal years of the emperors. According to Friedman, the ὑπατεία of the *Ma'asim* should be understood in the broadest sense as a royal era, following the vague usage of האיפטיאה in rabbinic aggada.³¹ It is likely, however, given the fact that the passage in question comes from a legal text and that the era of the consulate is in fact prevalent in Byzantine documents and is even the subject of imperial legislation, that ὑπατεία should be understood in its formal sense in the *Ma'asim* as well. If this is the case, it is clear that the passage must pre-date the Muslim conquest, at which time the papyrological record of consular dating in the East comes to an end.³² Dating by a foreign empire would also be problematic according to rabbinic halakha.³³

The *Ma'asim* shed light on various aspects of Jewish life in Palestine towards the end of Byzantine rule, including the role of Jewish courts

²⁸ See A. Rabello, "Civil Jewish Jurisdiction in the Days of Emperor Justinian (527–565): Codex Justinianus 1.9.8," *Israel Law Review* 33 (1999): 51–66 (esp. 61–62).

²⁹ See S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, 2001), 120 n. 58.

³⁰ Lewin, "Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael," 96 (= no. 21 in Newman, *Ma'asim*).

³¹ M. Friedman, "The Hypateia (the Royal Era) in Documents and in the Midrash: Reality of the Ancient World in Literary Garb," *Te'uda* 11 (1996): 205–29 (Hebrew).

³² On the consular era in the papyri and in Byzantine law see R. Bagnall and K. Worp, *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt* (Leiden, 2004), 88–98.

³³ Cf. Mishna Gittin 8.5.

and judges, economics and numismatics, and standards of modest dress and behavior for Jewish women. Of particular interest are those passages which deal with cases of apostasy, a problem which assumes far greater proportions in the *Ma'asim* than in earlier halakhic literature. We conclude our survey with one example to illustrate the phenomenon. In a Geniza manuscript published by Friedman we find a question posed concerning the status of *gittin* (bills of divorce) sent by husbands who have apostatized under duress to their wives residing among Jews in a different province (אפרכ"יה = ἐπαρχία). The husbands were forbidden to leave their place of residence, and the *gittin* were delivered by another apostate, who, it seems, converted of his own free will and was therefore at liberty to travel.³⁴ There is no explicit indication of the circumstances of the forced conversion of the Jews, but the allusion to their limited freedom of movement is suggestive. Such measures are familiar from Visigothic Spain, as we learn from a law promulgated by Erviga in 681 and ratified in the same year by the Twelfth Council of Toledo.³⁵ Yet the same practice is known already from the eve of the Muslim conquest. According to the *Doctrina Iacobi*, after having been forced to convert to Christianity by imperial decree in 632, the merchant Jacob was forbidden to leave North Africa to meet his supplier in Constantinople until the latter appealed to a highly placed patron for assistance.³⁶

III. THE MINOR TRACTATES AND OTHER WORKS

Various halakhic works not included in the classical corpora of the Mishna, Tosefta, and the two *Talmudim* are commonly known collectively as the Minor Tractates.³⁷ There is no formal canon of Minor Tractates and the list of texts is a matter of convention. Prominent among the halakhic works (some of which also contain consider-

³⁴ Friedman, "Ma'ase gadol," 204-5 (= no. 73 in Newman, *Ma'asim*).

³⁵ A. Linder, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit, 1997), 321-3, 518, 520-1.

³⁶ G. Dagron and V. Déroche, "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VII^e siècle," *Travaux et mémoires* 11 (1991): 216-9, 239-40.

³⁷ What follows is not a survey of the Minor Tractates, but merely an attempt to clarify their place within the larger question of halakhic literature in the Byzantine realm. For proper surveys see: M. Lerner, "The Minor Tractates," in *The Literature of the Sages*, Part 1, ed., S. Safrai (Assen, 1987), 367-403; Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 225-32.

able aggadic material) are the tractates *Soferim*, *Semahot*, *Kalla* and *Kalla Rabbati*, *Derekh Eretz Rabba* and *Derekh Eretz Zuta*, *Sefer Tora*, *Mezuza*, *Tefillin*, *Tzitzit*, *Avadim*, *Kutim*, and *Gerim*.

We have already seen that Grätz dated the Minor Tractates to the late sixth or early seventh century, but that was due to his mistaken assumption that they were identical with the *Ma'asim li-vnei Eretz Yisrael*. In fact, it is impossible to generalize about the provenance of this heterogeneous group of texts. Some may antedate the Palestinian Talmud,³⁸ but others probably date to the geonic period. Furthermore, not all of them are Palestinian; *Kalla Rabbati* is clearly Babylonian. In the absence of explicit evidence, the most we can say is that the possibility that some of these works (or portions of them) were composed in Byzantine Palestine is not altogether remote.³⁹

Besides the *Ma'asim*, several other Palestinian halakhic texts known only or primarily from the Cairo Geniza have been dated by their editors to the Byzantine period. In none of them is the evidence as compelling as in the *Ma'asim*. Margaliot published what he called *The Book of Blessings and Documents* from two manuscripts and claimed on the basis of numismatic terminology that it should be dated between the fifth and the beginning of the seventh centuries.⁴⁰ He was unaware of the fact that Muslim monetary reform of Byzantine coinage took place only at the end of the seventh century and not at the time of the conquest. One of the documents copied in the book is dated 828 C.E., but Margaliot assumed that this was a late scribal interpolation. In any event, the book clearly draws on different sources. Thus while it is possible that portions of it are indeed pre-Muslim, that need not be the case for the entire work.

On the basis of several manuscripts, Margaliot edited another text in Aramaic which he entitled *Halakhot of Incest of the People of the Land of Israel*. One passage in the work contains the word בוריס, a transcription of Greek χωρίς, i.e., "besides." Margaliot concluded from this unusual example of Greek influence that the entire text was written in Palestine around the sixth century.⁴¹

³⁸ See for example the case made for an early dating of *Semahot* in D. Zlotnick, *The Tractate "Mourning"* (New Haven, 1966), 1-9 ("end of the third century").

³⁹ On *Soferim* and Byzantium see below.

⁴⁰ Margaliot, *Halakhot of the Land of Israel*, 1-38 (esp. p. 26). For further discussion of the date, see the literature in n. 9.

⁴¹ Margaliot, *Halakhot of the Land of Israel*, 56-71 (esp. p. 73).

Finally, Yehuda Feliks edited a text entitled *Perek Zera'im*—"Chapter of Seeds," pieced together by Margaliot from three Geniza fragments.⁴² The work is largely aggadic and deals with the sprouting of seeds, plant development, and animal gestation, but the discussion has halakhic implications and is not merely academic. Feliks was of the opinion that *Perek Zera'im* was written not long after the Palestinian Talmud.⁴³

IV. SOUTHERN ITALY

After the Muslim conquest of Palestine, we must turn to southern Italy under Byzantine rule for examples of halakhic literature which might properly be considered "Byzantine." The cultural and academic ties between the Jews of Italy and those of Palestine until the ninth or tenth century have long been recognized, as has the role of Italian Jews as a vehicle for the transmission of Palestinian teachings to Ashkenaz.⁴⁴ But for all that, there are few halakhic works which may be attributed with any confidence to the Jews of Italy in this period. The most outstanding example is *Halakhot Ketuvot*, which Margaliot argued was composed in Italy in the ninth century.⁴⁵ Once again, the argument is in part numismatic: the book contains a reference to the *tari*, a popular coin struck first in Muslim Sicily in the tenth(!) century; note that even if Margaliot is correct with regard to the country of origin, his chronology is mistaken.⁴⁶

Recently Danzig has suggested southern Italy as one among several possible locations for the composition of various halakhic works

⁴² In Margaliot, *Halakhot of the Land of Israel*, 153–200. A fourth fragment has been identified by N. Danzig, *Introduction to Halakhot Pesuqot* (New York, 1999), 205 (Hebrew).

⁴³ Cf. A. Lehnardt, "Perek Zera'im—eine Schrift aus der Zeit des Talmud Yerushalmi—Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar," *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 30 (2003): 57–89. Lehnardt argues that the work is actually contemporaneous with the Palestinian Talmud.

⁴⁴ A. Grossman, "When Did the Hegemony of Eretz Israel Cease in Italy?" in *Masat Moshe: Studies in Jewish and Islamic Culture Presented to Moshe Gil*, eds., E. Fleischer, M. Friedman, and J. Kraemer (Tel Aviv, 1998), 143–57 (Hebrew); Ta-Shma, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, 177–87; S. Emanuel, *Fragments of the Tablets* (Jerusalem, 2007), 75–81 (Hebrew).

⁴⁵ M. Margaliot, ed., *Halakhot Ketuvot* (Jerusalem, 1942), 11–20 (Hebrew).

⁴⁶ On the *tari* see S. Stern "Tari," *Studi medievali* (ser. III) 11/1 (1970): 177–207 (esp. p. 186 n. 30). On the Italian origin of *Halakhot Ketuvot* see Ta-Shma, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, 238–9.

distinguished by the combined influence of Palestine and Babylonia: *Hilkhot Reu*, *Sefer Ve-hizhir*, and *Sefer Hefetz*.⁴⁷ The same hypothesis has been proposed with regard to parts of the Minor Tractate *Soferim*.⁴⁸ As a cultural and halakhic melting pot, southern Italy has also been suggested as the place where the geonic commentary to the Mishnaic order of *Taharot* was adorned with numerous Greek glosses and as the venue of the revision of the Palestinian Talmud which in Ashkenaz went by the name *Sefer Yerushalmi*.⁴⁹ Yet notwithstanding all this activity—if indeed the the place of origin of these works has been correctly identified—the authors and editors reveal little more of themselves and their world than their posture with respect to the authority and halakhic traditions of Palestine and Babylonia.

⁴⁷ Danzig, *Introduction to Halakhot Pesuqot*, 64–6; idem, “The First Discovered Leaves of Sefer Hefes,” *JQR* 82 (1991): 103–9.

⁴⁸ Lerner, “Minor Tractates,” 400; cf. D. Blank, “It’s Time to Take Another Look at ‘Our Little Sister’ Soferim: A Bibliographical Essay,” *JQR* 90 (1999): 4 n. 10.

⁴⁹ Ta-Shma, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, 239–40; Emanuel, *Fragments of the Tablets*, 78 (with previous literature).

BYZANTIUM'S ROLE IN THE TRANSMISSION OF JEWISH KNOWLEDGE IN THE MIDDLE AGES: THE ATTITUDE TOWARD CIRCUMCISION*

Micha Perry

I. INTRODUCTION

Byzantium's central role in the transmission of Jewish knowledge during the Middle Ages has been recognized by students of Jewish history since the nineteenth century.¹ According to a basic schema then formulated, which still enjoys currency today, Byzantium Jewry was one of the main vessels of transmission of knowledge from Palestine to Europe and from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. According to this scheme, two centers of Jewish life emerged from Antiquity. The first, buttressed by tradition and past holiness, was in Palestine. The other, in Babylonia, drew strength from *Torat Bavel* (Babylonian learning), which granted exilic Jewry an orderly and rational legal system. These centers were characterized by distinct ways of thinking and produced distinct corpora of legal literature: the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds. The Cairo Geniza has revealed the complex relationship shared by these centers in the Gaonic period and the struggle between them for dominance over legal approaches, ordinations, and the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. This Diaspora, which had existed since the Roman period, developed rapidly in the wake of the Muslim conquests. As new communities were established, for example in North Africa, Andalusia, and Caucasia, they turned to the centers for guidance and support.

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¹ For example: Solomon J. Löb Rapoport (Sh"R), *Toldoth Gedolai Israel*, (Warsaw, 1903; 1913 copy ed. Jerusalem 1960—first published as articles circ. 1830), 218–24 (Hebrew); L. Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie* (Berlin, 1865), 104–10.

Scholars of medieval Jewish culture have traced a route of Jewish migration from Palestine to Byzantium and on to southern and then northern Italy, from where prominent families emigrated to Germany during the reign of Charlemagne.² This trajectory also marks the transfer of knowledge; thus, for example, I. M. Ta-Shma points out that Ashkenazic cultural stratum before the eleventh century was of Palestinian origin, and was transmitted orally via Byzantium and Italy.³ In other studies, Ta-Shma notes the actual ties connecting Byzantium to Ashkenaz in the later Middle Ages.⁴ From Antiquity to the Middle Ages, then, Byzantium served as both geographical and chronological medium between Palestinian knowledge and Ashkenaz.

The transfer of knowledge in the Middle Ages was dependent on trade routes, political conditions, and the other realia that provided the conditions for all medieval communication, each locale and period according to its particular historical situation.⁵ Certainly, despite fluctuations, contact between Byzantium and Northern Europe via Italy was consistently maintained, through trade and through cultural, religious, and political connections. The fact that knowledge spreads, at all times and places, even where obstacles are present, will surprise no one. The study of the 'transmission of knowledge' seeks to go beyond this basic fact, and to focus on what happens to knowledge in the course of its transmission, its distribution, and its reception. What changes does it undergo? Such changes may be internal (e.g., permutations in style or redaction errors), or external, involving differences in the way material is understood or in the ideological, social, or political uses to which it is put. These changes should not be seen as corruptions, errors, or reductions, but as authentic revelations of the vitality

² A. Grossman, *The Early Sages of Germany*, 2nd Edition (Jerusalem, 1998), 424–34 (Hebrew); Idem, "The Ties of the Jews of Ashkenaz to the Land of Israel," *Vision and Conflict in the Holy Land*, ed., R. Cohen (Jerusalem, 1985) 78–101.

³ I. Ta-Shma, *Early Franco-German Ritual and Custom* (Jerusalem, 1992; 3rd ed. 1999), 98–100 (Hebrew).

⁴ Idem, "On Greek-Byzantine Rabbinic Literature of the Fourteenth Century," *Tarbiz* 62 (1993), 101–14 (Hebrew); Idem, "Toward a History of the Cultural Links between Byzantine and Ashkenazic Jewry," *Meah Shearim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed., E. Fleischer, G. Blidstein, C. Horowitz and B. Septimus (Jerusalem, 2001), 61–71 (Hebrew). Both reprinted in Idem, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature Vol. 3 Italy & Byzantium* (Jerusalem, 2006), 177–87, 202–17 (Hebrew).

⁵ C. Haskins, "The Spread of Ideas in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* I (1926): 19–30.

of the community assimilating the knowledge, which it adapts to suit a new reality.⁶ They therefore bear witness to the society in which this knowledge was absorbed—in this case, to medieval Judaism, the relations between different Jewish communities, and even the history of Jewish culture in general.

In this article we aim not only to demonstrate the transfer of knowledge from Byzantium to the West, but also to point out that the process of transmitting knowledge was a creative one, and it left its marks on the knowledge itself. Furthermore, we wish to show that Byzantium should not be seen merely as a ‘vessel,’ or a static ‘channel’ of transmission of knowledge from Palestine to Europe, but rather as a junction of traditions; receiving them from the East as well as from the West; and transforming the knowledge according to its unique cultural traits. Through the investigation of one test-case we intend to portray Byzantium’s place in the dynamic picture of transmission and transformation of Jewish knowledge from the eighth century to the twelfth, from the East to the West.

Thus, this article traces some transformations in the attitude towards an uncircumcised Jew due to medical reasons, as portrayed in the various uses and understandings of the phrase “an uncircumcised Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision.” We will follow this phrase from its midrashic and Talmudic roots, via its particular use in Byzantium, and from there to southern Italy and northern France. We will contextualize this concept broadly, in order to better perceive the changes that befell it in the course of its migration from the Eastern to the Western world. We will argue that the different uses of this concept correspond to distinct basic perceptions of the foreskin. On the one hand, an originally Palestinian perspective saw the foreskin as impure, an ontological defect, a defilement of the human body curable only by removal; in consequence, it serves to distinguish Jew from non-Jew. In contrast, in the Babylonian conception, circumcision appears as but one commandment among many; the foreskin, then, is neither an ontological defect nor impure, and accordingly does not distinguish Jew from non-Jew. Through the concept, “a Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision,” we will see how these ideas persisted among

⁶ A. Grafton, “Introduction: Notes from Underground on Cultural Transmission,” in *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe*, eds., idem and Ann Blair (Philadelphia, 1990), 1–7.

Jews in the Middle Ages, first in Byzantium and second among the Babylonian Geonim. We will then trace the migration of the Palestinian-Byzantine attitude to northern France, where it received expression in both Biblical and Talmudic commentary. Finally, we will see how this perspective was rejected or transformed in the twelfth century. Our discussion will attempt to explain these different perspectives and their transformations in the context of historical realities in the Byzantine world and the West, and of new traditions and social and political changes that emerged during the twelfth century.

II. CIRCUMCISION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

Ancient Near Eastern tradition, beginning with the priests of Egypt and culminating with the Jews and Phoenicians, attached positive value to circumcision. However, Hellenistic culture and its Roman heirs associated circumcision with castration and the physical and aesthetic corruption of the body. Circumcision thus became a battleground in the encounter between Jewish and Hellenistic-Roman culture. With the emergence of Christianity, an Eastern religion that addressed itself to a Hellenistic congregation and advocated spiritual rather than physical circumcision, the act continued to be perceived as characteristically Jewish, and remained a touchstone of conflict between Jews and non-Jews.⁷ At the same time, under Christian culture, specifically in the East, self-castration as a religious act gained acceptance, as evidenced by Origen and later Byzantine Christian saints.⁸ Similarly, although Byzantine law inherited the Roman prohibition against castration, the ancient Near Eastern phenomenon of eunuchism was widespread in Byzantium, where it flourished until its termination by the Macedonian

⁷ As manifested, for example, in Paul's epistles: NT, Romans 2:29, Corinthians 7:19. For further information on the history of circumcision see, for example: S. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, 1999), 39–49; E. Mark, ed., *The Covenant of Circumcision* (Hanover, 2003); L. Glick, *Marked in your Flesh: Circumcision from Ancient Judea to Modern America* (Oxford, 2005); S. Mimouni, *La circoncision dans le monde judéen aux époques grecque et romaine: Histoire d'un conflit interne au judaïsme* (Paris, 2007); and the bibl. *Ibidem.* 359–64.

⁸ K. Ringrose, "Passing the Test of Sanctity: Denial of Sexuality and Involuntary Castration," in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium*, ed., L. James (Brookfield, 1999), 123–38.

dynasty in the twelfth century.⁹ This phenomenon was completely absent in the Christian West. Although slaves, Slavs, and others were castrated, we find no class of eunuchs, nor any sort of administrative or economic importance attached to eunuchs in the West. Castration as a religious act was also unknown.¹⁰

Under the Roman law Jews were permitted to circumcise themselves, but the circumcision of others (understood as an act of conversion) was punished as castration. The exclusive connection between Jews and circumcision was thus acknowledged and even reinforced.¹¹ This law was later adopted and elaborated by Byzantine-Christian emperors and legislators. Under the influence of Christianity, and particularly in relation to the prohibition on slave circumcision, Byzantine versions of the Roman law referred to the act of circumcision as a “defilement” or “pollution” (*pollutione judaica; caeno confundere; foedare*).¹² A comparison to laws composed in the West, like those found in the Canon law and local Synods, shows that circumcision was discussed only in the context of the circumcision of slaves, which was of course forbidden. These prohibitions all essentially recapitulate the decrees of the Fourth Synod of Toledo in 633. However, the terminology of defilement and pollution that we find in the Eastern versions is absent from this type of original Western legislation.¹³ To this we may add

⁹ *Idem*, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (Chicago, 2003); on the place of eunuchs in Byzantine thought, see: A. Kazhdan and A. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley, 1985), 67.

¹⁰ With two exceptions that I know of: Abelard, see: M. Irvine, “Abelard and (Re) Writing the Male Body: Castration, Identity and Remasculinization,” in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, eds., J. Cohen and B. Wheeler (New York, 2000), 87–106; and the less well-known Aldhelm of Malmesbury; see G. Dempsey, “Aldhelm of Malmesbury’s Social Theology,” *Peritia: Journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland* 15 (2001): 58–80.

¹¹ R. Abusch, “Circumcision and Castration under Roman Law in the Early Roman Empire,” in *The Covenant of Circumcision*, ed., E. Mark (Hanover, 2003), 75–86; S. Mimouni, *La circoncision dans le monde judéen aux époques grecque et romaine: Histoire d’un conflit interne au judaïsme* (Paris, 2007), 310–22; A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, 1987), No. 1; 6; 10; 11; 44; 48; 54. The relevant document is No. 6, in which Modestinus speaks in the name of Antoninus Pius; regarding innovations over the length of the Byzantine period, see: A. Linder, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit, 1997), No. 5:86; 7:181; 8:260.

¹² Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, respectively: No. 41, 44, 17. The latter is apparently not Byzantine, but rather the Visigothic commentary of the Theodosian Code.

¹³ Linder, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages*, index, s.v. “Jews: circumcision.” Regarding the maintenance of slaves and their circumcision, Shlomo

Robert Bonfil's observation that "circumcised" as a negative epithet for Jews was common in anti-Jewish Byzantine polemical literature, while it seems almost absent from parallel literature in the West.¹⁴

In sum, we discern a possible difference between Eastern and Western Christian cultures in relation to circumcision. The East was nourished by a double heritage: on the one hand, circumcision and castration were a known phenomenon in the ancient Near East, and these accordingly received some expression in Byzantine political and religious life. On the other hand, classical Hellenistic-Roman culture strongly rejected such an assault on physical integrity; while under Christian influence, Jewish circumcision became specifically associated with the contamination of the Jewish body, even producing the negative epithet "circumcised," which may be translated as impure, dirty. To this particular association, which may be termed emotional, it is hard to find parallels in the Catholic West, which of course also strongly opposed circumcision.

III. AN UNCIRCUMCISED JEW: PALESTINE AND BABYLONIA

We will now focus on the transmission and transformations of the concept "an uncircumcised Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision." This concept refers to a Jew who is medically exempt from circumcision: his elder brothers died after being circumcised, and circumcision is therefore assumed to be dangerous for him (This figure must be distinguished from one who rejects circumcision, the *mumar le-ar^elut*). Examination of this sort of 'extreme case' illuminates distinctions and focuses our analysis, so that we do not lose our way within the vast amount of material concerning circumcision. Thus, restrictions on the religious participation of an uncircumcised Jew of this type points to a conception in which the foreskin is a prohibitive blemish, regardless of subjective circumstances.

Simonson notes that: "The policy in the eastern part of the Empire was more repressive than the one in the west," S. Simonson, *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, Vol. VII: History (Toronto, 1991), 159. The specific prohibition against the circumcision of Christians, not necessarily slaves, appears again in the West in 1267; see S. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century*, edited and arranged, with additional notes, by Kenneth R. Stow, Vol. 2: 1254-1314 (Philadelphia, 1989), 247.

¹⁴ At the opening lecture of the research group "Between Minority and Majority: The Byzantine Jewish Case", at: 'Scholion—Interdisciplinary Research Center in Jewish Studies' in 2003.

Evidence for this type of conception is found already in a known passage from *Midrash B'reshit Rabbah*, according to which Abraham sits at the opening of Gehenna and bars "circumcised Jews" from entering. The midrash goes on to state that Abraham attaches the foreskins of infants who have died before their circumcision onto "those who have sinned too much," so that the latter will be condemned to Gehenna. This midrash is the source of the widespread perception that the foreskin precludes entrance to Eden, and draws its owner, like a magnet, straight to Gehenna.¹⁵ This midrash is also reflected in the Babylonian Talmud, but it has been defanged, and only indirectly indicates that it is circumcision which redeems one from the gates of Gehenna.¹⁶

May we assume that it is no coincidence that we find this perspective—that the foreskin *a priori* and automatically determines between Gehenna and Eden—precisely in Palestine, under Byzantine Christian rule, and in the context of an acquaintance with Byzantine Christianity. Is this not a decisive negative response to Paul's question, "Therefore if the uncircumcision keeps the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?"¹⁷

The "uncircumcised Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision" appears first in the Babylonian Talmud in relation to the principle that only one who is circumcised may circumcise another. On the basis of *Mishnah Nedarim* 3:10, which establishes that one who vows to derive no benefit "from the uncircumcised—is permitted [to derive benefit] from uncircumcised Jews," while one who foreswears "the circumcised—is permitted regarding circumcised non-Jews," the Talmud establishes the sweeping principle that a circumcised non-Jew is nonetheless considered uncircumcised, whereas an uncircumcised

¹⁵ *B'reshit Rabbah*, ed. Theodor-Albeck, 48:8. It seems to me that there is no need to attach excessive significance to the phrasing of the midrash: "circumcised Jew" and "those who have sinned too much," which underwent a multitude of changes over the generations in mentality, adaptation, and internal and external censorship. Circumcision as an instant ticket to Gehenna appears also in a midrash about *those who pass through Emeq ha-Baka*; see the following note.

¹⁶ BT, Er. 19a: "As for the verse, *Those who pass through Emeq ha-Baka* (Psalms 84:7)—this means that they are at that point liable for Gehenna, but our father Abraham comes, raises them, and accepts them; except for a Jew who has had intercourse with a non-Jew, since his foreskin is extended and he does not recognize him." In accordance with what is brought below (Ch. 6), it appears that the Tosafists' explanation of this section creates even more disassociation, by blaming this Jew's descent to Gehenna on his sinful intercourse itself, rather than its physiological implications. See: Tosafot, B.M. 58b, *Huṣ*.

¹⁷ NT, Romans 2:26.

Jew is nonetheless considered circumcised. Therefore, an uncircumcised Jew is permitted to circumcise others. It is thus clear that circumcision does not serve to distinguish Jew from non-Jew; on the contrary, even a circumcised non-Jew is deemed “uncircumcised,” and an uncircumcised Jew “circumcised.”¹⁸ Here also we may discern a possible response to Paul’s question; instead of distinguishing Jew from non-Jew on a physiological basis, i.e. according to circumcision, the Babylonian Talmud provides a purely ethnic basis for distinction.

IV. BAGHDAD AND BYZANTIUM

Though composed under a different cultural atmosphere than the Talmud—that of the new Muslim conqueror—it will come as no surprise that the Babylonian perspective is adopted by the *Sheiltot of Rab Ahai*,¹⁹ an author from the Gaonic period, the heirs of Babylonian learning in what is present-day Iraq. We can assume that living under the rule of Muslims, a circumcised people,²⁰ only facilitated the acceptance of the Babylonian stance. Within the context of a systematic discussion of laws pertaining to circumcision, the *Sheiltot* establishes, following the Babylonian Talmud, that a non-Jew may not circumcise a Jew. He thus reenacts the approach that circumcision does not materially divide Jew from non-Jew, and applies this Talmudic ruling to the “[uncircumcised] Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision,” who is thus “considered as if circumcised.”²¹

The *Sheiltot* is one of the Babylonian compositions that we can definitively identify as having been known in Byzantium. R. Tobias b. Eliezer of Kastoria (late eleventh to early twelfth cent.) borrowed liberally from it in his work *Leqah Tob*. R. Tobias also draws from the

¹⁸ BT, AZ 27a. In Hul. 4b, it is established that one whose “brothers have died from circumcision is a valid Jew.” See also: Mishnah, Nedarim 3:10. For the basic discussion about a person whose brothers have died at the time of their circumcision, see: bTalmud, Shab. 134a. For a medical explanation, see: Y. Levi, “Medical Rationales Concerning ‘One Whose Brothers Have Died from Circumcision,’” *No’am* 18 (1974–5): 74–77 (Hebrew).

¹⁹ On this work see: R. Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (Yale, 1998), 207–15.

²⁰ On the circumcision among the Muslims consult: A. Wensinck, “Khitan,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam* Vol. V (Leiden, 1986), 20–3.

²¹ *Sheiltot de-Rab Ahai, Sh’mot*, No. 37; *Va-yere* No. 10.

Sheiltot in his discussion of circumcision, but he specifically omits the portion of that work cited above.²²

However, in his discussion of the laws of Passover, R. Tobias establishes that the “uncircumcised one” mentioned in Ex. 12:48 is a “Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision.” This interpretation requires explanation: the Scriptural passage states that “This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof,” and later that “no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.” Traditional exegesis required that the two be distinguished. Most previous midrashim and commentaries identify the “stranger” as a non-Jew and the “uncircumcised one” as a Jew who has sinned, an apostate or a *mumar le-ar'lut*, i.e. one who is intentionally uncircumcised. According to the Babylonian Talmud, the two are distinguished in that the former’s heart is not turned towards heaven, whereas the latter’s heart is turned towards heaven, except for his rejection of circumcision.²³

The opinion reflected in the *Leqah Tob*’s interpretation is radical: even a Jew who has remained uncircumcised because circumcision poses a threat to his life is forbidden to partake of the Passover sacrifice. Thus, in late eleventh-century Byzantium we find the explicit perspective that the foreskin is a physiological impurity that necessarily defiles its possessor, regardless of subjective circumstances. Despite familiarity with the Babylonian tradition, in Byzantium the Palestinian tradition was maintained and developed.

V. NORTHERN FRANCE

R. Tobias b. Eliezer’s identification of the “uncircumcised one” of Ex. 12:48 as an “[uncircumcised] Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision” appears simultaneously in the commentary of Rashi (Troyes, 1040–1104), *ad loc.* Rashi and R. Tobias were contemporaries, and their relationship requires clarification. On the one hand, we may note Rashi’s connection to Byzantine material.²⁴ At the same time, R. Tobias knew of events in Ashkenaz during the People’s Crusade of

²² *Leqah Tob*, ed. Buber, Intr., p. 42 and in Buber’s notes, *ad loc.*, Gen. 17, 18 (according to the editor’s enumeration).

²³ BT, Pes. 96a.

²⁴ M. Banitt, *Rashi: Interpreter of the Biblical Letter* (Tel Aviv, 1985); A. Grossman, *The Early Sages of France: Their Lives, Leadership, and Works* (Jerusalem, 1995), 350–2 (Hebrew).

1096.²⁵ We may note at this juncture that information did not necessarily flow in one direction only, from Byzantium to Europe. Elazar Touitou has offered a unique reconstruction of the relationship between Rashi and *Leqah Tob*. According to Touitou, Rashi's disciples added interpretations drawn from *Leqah Tob* to Rashi's comments, so that they became an integrated unit.²⁶ For two reasons, this interesting thesis is unlikely to help our current inquiry. First, in every manuscript in which Touitou found evidence of additions to the text, the "Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision" appears without any indication of addition. Second, the perspective reflected in this interpretation was familiar to Rashi, as demonstrated by his commentary on the Talmud as we will see below. Though it is difficult to answer this question decisively, in the case at hand the most likely solution assumes a shared source, although such a source has not been identified. If this is so, we may suppose that this source, used by both R. Tobias and Rashi, and which accords, for example, with the midrash in *B^ereshit Rabbah* about Abraham, was of Palestinian-Byzantine origin.²⁷

In any case, this stance was familiar to Rashi, as is confirmed by his commentary on the Talmud; he not only applies this interpretation of the "uncircumcised one" when speaking about the consumption of the passover,²⁸ but also systematically identifies every "uncircumcised one" mentioned in a legal context as a "Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision."²⁹ It appears that for Rashi as well, the foreskin, even in such a situation, is a blemish that prevents its owner from partaking fully of Jewish holiness.³⁰

²⁵ *Leqah Tob*, ed. Buber, Parasat Emor. See also Buber's introduction on this matter.

²⁶ E. Touitou, "Traces of '*Leqah Tob*' in the wording of Rashi's commentary on the Torah," *Alei Sefer* 15 (1989): 37–44 (Hebrew). Touitou's analysis was restricted to the book of Genesis.

²⁷ For example, Nachmanides notes in his commentary on the Torah *ad loc.* that Rashi drew this interpretation from the *Mekilta*, which R. Tobias also used frequently, although all extant versions of the *Mekilta* are missing this interpretation, see for example: M. Kahana, *Genizah Fragments of the Halakhic Midrashim* (Jerusalem, 2005) (Hebrew).

²⁸ BT, Pes. 28a; 60a; 96a.

²⁹ E.g., regarding the consumption of *t^rumah*, the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood by an uncircumcised person, the ritual grasping of the meal offering, the collection of sacrificial blood, and pilgrimage. In consecutive order: BT Yeb. 70a; Ar. 3a; Men. 6a; Zeb. 15b; Hag. 4b.

³⁰ On the significance of circumcision, blood, and the sign of the covenant in Ashkenazi society, see: E. Baumgarten, "The Marking of the Flesh: Circumcision, Blood,

Thus a Palestinian midrashic tradition intersects with terminology derived from the Babylonian Talmud in an original interpretation in a Byzantine midrashic collection (*Leqah Tob*), which passes in this form into northern French biblical exegesis. From there it even enters into legal discussion, via commentary on the Talmud.

VI. THE TOSAFISTS

In the twelfth century we witness a sudden change of approach towards the “uncircumcised Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision.” An objection was raised against Rashi’s interpretation by his own grandson, Rabbenu Tam (Jacob ben Meir, 1100–1171).³¹ Rabbenu Tam advanced the most logical solution: a Jew “whose brothers have died from circumcision” has remained uncircumcised under duress; why should he be barred from partaking of the passover? He thus restores the logic of the Talmudic passage in *Pesahim* where the “uncircumcised one” of Ex. 12:48 is described as rejecting circumcision. According to Rabbenu Tam, this figure is a *mumar le-ar^elut* who remains uncircumcised out of fear of circumcision rather than defiance; therefore “his heart” is nonetheless turned “towards heaven.” Rabbenu Tam’s stance is characterized by legal rationalism on the one hand, and on the other by a return to the position of the Babylonian Talmud itself, as achieved through the attempt to understand the internal logic of the Talmudic passage and its concepts. This interpretation reflects the revolutionary approach of the Tosafists, and of Rabbenu Tam in particular:³² a great reliance on the Babylonian Talmud, to the point that it becomes “our Talmud,” and a return to Babylonian ways of thought, namely logical rationalism and syllogism, which also most accord with the ways

and Inscribing Identity on the Body in Medieval Jewish Culture,” in *Micrologos* 13 (2005), *The Human Skin*, 321–2. See also the question posed by Rashi, apparently in his youth, regarding the circumcision of infants who had perished before their circumcision: Rashi, *Responsa*, ed., I. Elfenbein (New York, 1943), No. 40.

³¹ Publ. *Tosafot*, Hag. 4b, *de-marbeh* (in the name of R. Elhanan b. Isaac *ha-zaqen*); Zeb. 22b, *’arel*; *Tosafot Yeshenim*, Yeb. 70a, *’arel*; *Tosafot ha-Rosh*, Yeb. 70a, *ha-’arel*; *Tosafot Maharam*, Yeb. 70a, *ha-’arel*.

³² Indeed, within the framework of Tosafist thinking, Rabbenu Tam’s opinion was rejected by his nephew R. Isaac *ha-zaqen* (R”I). However, although R. Isaac restored Rashi’s opinion, his conceptual world was completely different than Rashi’s. See: *Tosafot Yeshenim*, Yeb. 70a, *ha-’arel*, and the shortened version in the published *Tosafot ad loc.* (not cited in R. Isaac’s name).

of thought that emerged and flourished among Christian scholars in the same time and place.³³ This approach did not acknowledge the perspective, based on emotional rejection, and bordering on a taboo, that saw the foreskin as an impurity and a pollution. It did not deal in concepts such as “pure” and “impure,” but only in the formalistic legal concepts, “forbidden” and “permitted.”³⁴

VII. SOUTHERN ITALY

In the twelfth century, then, among the Tosafists, the approach that understood the foreskin as an ontological impurity was transformed. Moreover, in the first half of the same century, a southern Italian author faithful to the Byzantine tradition brought about a further change in this perspective. In his discussion of matters relating to circumcision, Menaḥem b. Solomon, the author of *Seḳel Tob*, follows the legal discussion of *Leqah Tob*, which as noted is dependent in its turn on the *Sheiltot*. Following the *Sheiltot*, Menaḥem cites the mishnah discussed above, regarding one who has taken a vow against receiving benefit from either circumcised or uncircumcised people. He begins by quoting the version in the *Sheiltot*: “One who vows [that he will not derive] benefit from the uncircumcised is permitted in the case of uncircumcised Jews,” but then unexpectedly changes the second half of the equation, by continuing: “And one who vows [that he will not derive] benefit from the circumcised is forbidden in the case of circumcised non-Jews.” Thus, a circumcised non-Jew is in fact considered circumcised, i.e. circumcision does not define only Jews. This remark is neither a slip of the pen nor a scribal error. Not only does

³³ For a summary of perspectives regarding the relationship between the Tosafists and Christian legal trends, see: I. Ta-Shma, *Talmudic Commentary in Europe and North Africa* Vol. 1: 1000–1200, 2nd rev. ed. (Jerusalem, 1999), 84–9 (Hebrew).

³⁴ In her article about the significance of circumcision in Ashkenaz, cited above (n. 29), Baumgarten has argued that Ashkenazi Jews were unaware of (or were unwilling to acknowledge) the reality of uncircumcised Jews. She arrives at this conclusion on the basis of the fact that in distinction from Eastern jurists, Ashkenazi jurists, and especially Ashkenazi guidance books for the *mohel*, do not mention the case of one whose “brothers have died from circumcision,” or the Babylonian Talmud’s story of R. Nathan, *Hul.* 47b (see above, n. 18). Without undermining the article’s conclusions, we see that consideration of Talmudic commentary may suggest differently. See: Baumgarten, “The Marking of the Flesh,” 321–2.

the change appear in every manuscript, but Menaḥem immediately adds the explanation: "because circumcision applies to a non-Jew."³⁵

We may point out that as regards the perception of circumcision, this passage testifies to a clear change; circumcision no longer applies only to Jews and thus cannot define Jewishness nor serve to separate Jew from non-Jew, for even a circumcised non-Jew is considered circumcised. Who did Menaḥem b. Solomon have in mind when he claimed that "circumcision applies to a non-Jew"? Can we determine the identity of this non-Jew to whom circumcision "applies"? Two possibilities come to mind. The first, slaves, appears less convincing. Though Jews used to circumcise their non-Jewish household, from a historical perspective, the reality of slave circumcision is alien to the time and place in which *Seḳel Tob* was composed. Nonetheless, this may be precisely why Menaḥem is able to envision such a scenario; if so, the circumcised non-Jew to whom circumcision "applies" represents a hypothetical situation rather than reality.³⁶ This brings us to a second possibility: Muslims. From the seventh century on, in the political and even ideological and theological spheres, the actual phenomenon of circumcised non-Jews, i.e. Muslims, could not be ignored. Here also, however, we must object: how is *Seḳel Tob* distinct in this respect from either *Leqaḥ Tob* or the *Sheiltot*? Indeed, if the reference is in fact to Muslims, what change has occurred since the composition of the *Sheiltot*, whose author knew and lived in proximity to Muslims? It would seem that precisely this point offers a possible solution. According to his own testimony, Menaḥem composed *Seḳel Tob* in 1139, and scholarly opinion places him in southern Italy. At that time, this region was under the rule of the Norman king Roger II.³⁷ The Norman kingdom was one of history's greatest points of intercultural encounter. After Sicily was taken from the Muslims, who had ruled it for over two centuries,³⁸ a Norman kingdom was established there and

³⁵ *Seḳel Tob*, ed. Buber, Gen. 17, *Ve-rabbotenu darshu*.

³⁶ Regarding slaveholding and the slave trade see: S. Asaf, "Slaves and the Slave Trade among Medieval Jews," *Zion* 4 (1939): 91–125 (Hebrew); M. Toch, "The Jews of Early Medieval Europe: Slave-traders?" *Zion* 64 (1990): 39–63 (Hebrew).

³⁷ Many monographs have been written about Roger II. See, for example, a classic work and a contemporary study: E. Curtis, *Roger of Sicily and the Normans in Lower Italy* (New York, 1912); H. Houben, *Roger II of Sicily: A Ruler between East and West*, trans. G. Loud and D. Milburn (Cambridge, 2002).

³⁸ The Muslim conquest of the island began in 827, but Byzantium maintained a presence on the island until 965, and returned and held a piece of the small island

in southern Italy in which these three cultures—Greek, Muslim, and Latin—lived side by side. Perhaps it was precisely in such a locale—in which Jews were actively familiar with Muslim religion and culture, but lived neither under Muslim rule nor with a Muslim majority (as did the author of the *Sheiltot*, the Gaonim, and Maimonides)—that an understanding of Muslims as “circumcised,” a kind of intermediate status between “uncircumcised” and “Jewish,” was able to develop.

Support for the idea that Muslims are the referent here is found in *Eshkol ha-Kofer*, the impressive encyclopedia composed by Judah Hadassi, a Karaite living in Constantinople, less than a decade after *Sequel Tob*. In his discussion of the laws of circumcision, Judah Hadassi established, in line with Rabbanite opinion, that only one who is circumcised may circumcise others. But in contrast to all other authors, both Rabbanite and Karaite, he adds: “But the Ishmaelites are permitted to circumcise us when no Jew is present, for they do not abhor circumcision.”³⁹ Here we have the old Byzantine understanding, according to which the uncircumcised are impure and therefore may not circumcise, joined to the explicit statement that Muslims are circumcised and therefore possess a distinct status. The formulation is noteworthy: “for they do not abhor circumcision,” i.e., in contrast to the Christians, who do abhor it. Once again, we see that the perception of circumcision as ontological impurity may be located within the context of the encounter between Judaism and Eastern Christianity, that is, specifically in Byzantium. As we have seen in this article, this Byzantine reality is entirely different from that which prevailed in Western Europe or emerged with the rise of Islam.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

In order to emphasize Byzantium’s central role in the chain of transmission of Jewish knowledge in the Middle Ages, this article has traced a single concept, “an uncircumcised Jew whose brothers have died from circumcision,” from its ancient origins in Palestine, to Babylonia, Byzantium, southern Italy, and northern Europe. This concept encompasses basic perceptions relating to circumcision, which themselves

between 1038 and 1042. The Norman conquest began in 1060 and was completed in 1091.

³⁹ Judah Hadassi, *Eshkol ha-Kofer* (Gozlov, 1836), *Lo tinaf*, No. 299.

reflect broader perspectives on the body, holiness and impurity, and the essential demarcation between Jew and non-Jew.

As we have seen, in Palestine the foreskin was perceived as a physical pollution distinguishing non-Jew from Jew. In contrast, from the Babylonian perspective ethnic membership, rather than circumcision, divides Jew from non-Jew. The Palestinian conception remained prevalent in Byzantium, where despite knowledge of the Babylonian approach, the foreskin continued to be seen as an ontological blemish. This approach mirrors the Eastern Christian perception of Jewish circumcision as an ontological blemish and pollution. Like much other Byzantine material, the Byzantine Jewish approach reached northern France and was adopted by Rashi at the end of the eleventh century.

In the twelfth century changes befell this concept, both in France and in previously Byzantine southern Italy. In France, the diffusion of the Babylonian Talmud and its traditions, along with a tendency towards rational thought, brought about a rejection of the ontological understanding and an acceptance of the Babylonian approach, based on rational criticism and Babylonian sources. At the same time, in Norman southern Italy, in the context of the growing recognition of Islam and Muslims (but without any conflict with or subjection to them), the basic dichotomy between circumcised and uncircumcised changed, and the intermediate status of circumcised non-Jew was recognized.

(Translated from Hebrew by: Eve Krakowski)

THE KABBALAH IN BYZANTIUM: PRELIMINARY REMARKS*

Moshe Idel

I. INTRODUCTION: BEGINNINGS, CENTERS, AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

A wide variety of religious positions, and occasionally even opposing viewpoints, are reflected within the extensive kabbalistic literature now in our possession. Consequently, we can infer that the “Kabbalah” had diverse starting points. Scholars have tended to award special importance to its phenomenological beginning and consequently they avidly sought evidence which would confirm the first appearance of the symbolic system, convinced as they were that this system expressed for the Kabbalists the hidden meaning of the Jewish tradition. I refer to their efforts to disclose the earliest kabbalistic documents, those that could clearly attest to the existence of the theosophical system. Study of these documents confirmed for them that the Kabbalah first appeared in the second half of the twelfth century in Provence, the locale that, according to these scholars, the first historical personalities known to be Kabbalists, as well as the first book considered to be kabbalistic, *Sefer ha-Bahir*, were detected.¹ According to the accepted academic description, some of these kabbalistic ideas spread to the cities of Gerona and Barcelona, both in Catalonia, and from there continued to disseminate reaching Castile where, in the second half of the thirteenth century, they underwent dramatic development. Before us lies the scholarly assumption which proposed that the Kabbalah developed in a linear trajectory. The question of the dissemination of kabbalistic literature beyond the borders of the Iberian Peninsula did

* This is an English translation by Dr. Iris Felix of a Hebrew article printed initially in the journal *Kabbalah* 18 (2008): 197–227 where the reader can find also the Hebrew original texts. The original Hebrew version has been slightly revised and updated.

¹ G. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, translated by A. Arkush, edited by R. Werblowsky (Philadelphia, 1987).

not especially preoccupy these scholars. The paths of transmission of kabbalistic traditions from one center to another were, for them, only secondary concerns subsumed within the larger historical picture of the development of the Kabbalah.

Nevertheless, from the middle of the thirteenth century there is solid testimony of the existence of kabbalistic traditions, sometimes of meaningful proportions, to be found in five additional geographical centers: North Africa,² Franco-Germany,³ Italy,⁴ Sicily,⁵ the Byzantine Empire, and the Land of Israel.⁶ We are not speaking merely about the transmission of ideas but about beginnings that enjoyed continuity, about the establishment of centers of study which proved to be historically significant since they continued to produce kabbalistic works well after the disappearance of the Spanish center. In other words, already by the second half of the thirteenth century a linear description of the transmission of the Kabbalah proves irrelevant for fostering a deep understanding of the development of the Kabbalah. In my opinion, even prior to this historical period this type of description poses an essential difficulty. The important variations that existed between kabbalistic traditions found in Provence and those found in Catalonia to my mind give proof of the existence of different antecedent sources.⁷ Assuming the existence of different esoteric trends

² M. Idel, "The Beginning of Kabbala in North Africa? A Forgotten Document by R. Yehudah ben Nissim ibn Malka," *Pe'amim: Studies in Oriental Jewry* 43 (Spring 1990): 4–15 (Hebrew).

³ See G. Scholem, *The Beginning of the Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1948), 195–238 (Hebrew).

⁴ See M. Idel, *R. Menahem Recanati—The Kabbalist* (Jerusalem, 1998), 33–50 (Hebrew). More on the Italian center of Kabbalah, its emergence and its interaction with the Byzantine one see my *La cabbala in Italia (1280–1510)*, trans. F. Lelli, (Giuntina, 2007), the English version appeared in 2011 at Yale University Press, New Haven.

⁵ The details of Abulafia's activities in the cities Messina and Palermo warrant a separate study. About a legend concerning a Kabbalist from North Africa who arrived in Sicily see Idel, "The Beginning of Kabbala in North Africa?" 4–5.

⁶ M. Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Albany, 1988), 91–101.

⁷ See M. Idel, "Intention in Prayer in the Early Kabbalah: Between Franco-Germany and Provence," *Porat Yosef: Studies in Honor of R. Dr. Yosef Safran*, ed., B. Safran (Hoboken, 1992), 5–14 (Hebrew); "Prayer in Provencial Kabbalah," *Tarbiz* 62 (1993): 265–86 (Hebrew); "Interpretations of the Secret of Incest in the Early Kabbalah," *Kabbalah* 12 (2004): 89–199 (Hebrew); "On the Concept of Zimzum in Kabbalah and its Research," *Lurianic Kabbalah, Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, 10 (1992): 59–112 (Hebrew); H. Pedaya, *Nahmanides: Cyclical Time and Holy Text*, (Tel-Aviv, 2003) (Hebrew); M. Idel, "The Time of the End": Apocalypticism and Its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafia's Eschatology," *Apocalyptic Time*, ed.,

during the nascent period of the Kabbalah invites the possibility that these traditions could have undergone divergent as well as synthetic developments. In this context we could ask: did the arrival of these traditions to different locations generate further divergences? This line of questioning might perhaps take into account the different kinds of receptions these traditions enjoyed when they reached the specific cultural-historical circumstances that characterize the different centers. For instance, the Franco-German center, which already possessed its own esoteric and magical traditions, independent of the kabbalistic ones, accepted the Kabbalah differently than the North African center, which also possessed magical traditions, although of a different nature, theirs being dependent upon Hermetic traditions.⁸ The historical-phenomenological picture becomes even more complicated when we take note of the distinct possibility that some of the developments that occurred in these centers—whether they were due to local traditions extant before the arrival of the Kabbalah or newly formed synthetic traditions—influenced the developmental process of the Kabbalah in Spain starting from the sixth decade of the thirteenth century. The developments in these other centers would have enriched the stock of esoteric traditions already found in the Iberian Peninsula, sometimes even in the guise of a negative reaction to developments within the Kabbalah from outside as well as from inside Spain.⁹

I would venture to say that in order to understand the multiplicity and range of schools of kabbalistic thought, each possessing its own starting point, its own phenomenology and special history, it would be more effective to adopt another attitude, one that does not seek to find only unifying factors or emphasize a common theological basis for all the diverse kabbalistic literature. This proposal is borne out by the fact that many of the Kabbalists themselves were acquainted with a wide range of views on any given topic, and occasionally even chose more

A. Baumgarten (Leiden, 2000), 155–86; idem, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven, 1998), 58–100; E. Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia—Kabbalist and Prophet: Hermeneutics, Theosophy, and Theurgy* (Los Angeles, 2000).

⁸ M. Idel, “Hermeticism and Kabbalah,” *La tradizione ermetica dal mondo tardo antico all’umanesimo, Atti del Convegno nazionale di studi, Napoli, 20–24 novembre 2001*, a cura di Paolo Lucentini, Ilaria Parri, Vittoria Perrone Compagni (Turnhout, 2003), 385–427.

⁹ On the arrival of motifs stemming from Ashkenazi esoteric doctrines to Spain during the second half of the thirteenth century see M. Idel, “Ashkenazi Esotericism and Kabbalah in Barcelona,” *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 5 (2007): 69–113.

than one understanding or one solution in order to resolve the question at hand. In order to implement this type of research method, one must carefully analyze many details such as: concepts, models, wider imaginative structures, movement of people and materials from locale to locale, and assess the particular religious natures of the centers that were involved in the transmissions of these esoteric traditions.

Indubitably, the presence of a well-defined type of kabbalistic writing during the period that the Kabbalah first made its appearance within a specific geographic area would have left an indelible mark on its later development in this area. This pertains not only to the continuous intergenerational study of a certain body of literature, an understandable and natural phenomenon, but also to a certain type of understanding, maybe a peculiar hermeneutic, that would later be applied to other kabbalistic materials that reached this locale later. In the following pages, we will for the first time survey a general picture of the development of the Kabbalah in Byzantium, on the basis of bibliographical findings of previous scholars—especially E. Gottlieb and M. Kushnir-Oron—as well as my own research. I would like to point out that I will only deal with literature considered to be kabbalistic, namely, medieval material, and I will not concern myself here with Jewish mystical literature (i.e. *The Heikhalot* or liturgical poetry) even if elements of these literatures did find their way into kabbalistic works.¹⁰ On the other hand, I will not limit my discussion to the period of the rule of the Byzantine Empire, in other words until the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in the middle of the fifteenth century. I have widened my survey by almost one hundred years, since the trends that marked Byzantine kabbalistic literature endured that much longer after the fall of the Empire. A few of the ensuing discussions will concern issues of determining the time and place of kabbalistic compositions during the period of the Byzantine Empire. These discussions are necessary for the presentation of Byzantine literature as a separate unit, to be set apart to a certain degree from the other centers. The very act of bringing together the compositions that we are going to consider as Byzantine will contribute to a new perspective on the history of the Kabbalah, emphasizing the many important geographical

¹⁰ On this subject see D. Abrams, "Esoteric Writing in Ashkenaz and its Transition to Spain," *Mahanaim: A Quarterly for Studies in Jewish Thought and Culture* 6 (Jerusalem, 1993): 94–103 (Hebrew); M. Idel, "From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back, On the Circulation of Jewish Mystical Traditions," *Kabbalah* 14 (2006): 47–94.

centers, their special characters, as well as the power struggles between them. Some of the discussions are based on my perusal of numerous manuscripts, a significant portion of which have yet to be awarded detailed study. The limited framework of this article, understandably, does not allow for a more thorough and insightful survey of this literature, whose study still remains before us as a desideratum.

II. R. ABRAHAM ABULAFIA'S TWO VISITS TO GREECE

As far as we can assess, the first Kabbalist to compose a kabbalistic work on Byzantine soil and even actively promulgate his Kabbalah there was R. Abraham ben Shmuel Abulafia.¹¹ He visited Greece twice—once during the first few years of the 1260s, when he got married and before he was actually involved in the writing of Kabbalah: “I could not reach the Sambatyon River, for due to the wars of Ishmael and Esau I could not pass beyond Acre. So I left and returned by way of the kingdom of Greece, where I married a woman on my travels. There the spirit of G-d aroused me and I took my wife with me and started [to travel] in the direction of the springs of Ravenna to study Torah.”¹² The events mentioned here took place in the early 1260s and we assume that it was familial ties that caused Abulafia's later return to Greece.

The second time Abulafia visited Greece was during the second half of the 70s of the thirteenth century, after he had already studied Kabbalah and was subject to mystical experiences. He appears to have been in several places in the vicinity of southern Europe, including the Grecian cities of Thebes, Euthrypo, and Patros. It is very likely that one of his several books on the secrets found in Maimonides's *Guide*

¹¹ On this Kabbalists' unique brand of Kabbalah see, M. Idel, *R. Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine* (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1976) (Hebrew); idem., *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. M. Kallus, (Albany, 1989); *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. J. Chipman (Albany, 1987); “Between Magic of the Holy Names and the Kabbalah of the Names, Abraham Abulafia's Criticism,” *Mahanaim* 14 (2003): 79–95 (Hebrew); “Abulafia's Secrets of the Guide: A Linguistic Turn,” in *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism, Dedicated to the Memory and Academic Legacy of its Founder Alexander Altmann*, eds., A. Ivry, E. Wolfson and A. Arkush (Amsterdam, 1998), 289–329; E. Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia: Hermeneutics, Theosophy, and Theurgy* (Los Angeles, 2000); see also below notes 22, 58, 60, 142, 159.

¹² *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, Ms. Oxford-Bodlian 1580, fol. 164a, and compare to the version printed in the edition published by A. Gross (Jerusalem, 2005), 368.

of the *Perplexed* was composed then in Greece—the one entitled *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*.¹³ If this assumption proves to be accurate than this book would be considered to be the first kabbalistic book to ever be composed in Greece. I will return later to the subject of this book's ensuing influence in the Byzantine Empire.

All of our knowledge concerning Abulafia's sojourn and activities in Greece stem from his own writings. Since this is the case we will examine the relevant data gleaned from his works. I will commence with his description of his own composition, which is of a unique nature, and which introduced a new genre of kabbalistic literature, which Abulafia called the Books of Prophecy. So he writes in his own commentary on his fourth prophetic book, written in Italy:

This book¹⁴ is the third commentary on the fourth Book [of Prophecy],¹⁵ for Raziel¹⁶ composed [his] first [prophetic book] *Sefer ha-Yashar*, while in the city of Patros, in the country of Greece, in the year 5039 of Creation. He was then 39 years old, and this was the ninth year since he received his first prophecy.¹⁷ But until this year he never composed a book that could be considered as prophetic at all, although he had composed many philosophical works, among them a few on the secrets of Kabbalah. And in this ninth year God stirred him to go to the great city of Rome, as He had commanded him in Barcelona in the year 'E"l [= God; but it points to the year 5030/1=1270/1271 C.E.]. On his journey he passed through Trani and was seized by the gentiles after being denounced by Jewish slanderers, but miraculously with God's help, he was saved. Then he continued on to Capua and composed there,¹⁸ in the tenth year of his departure from Barcelona,¹⁹ the second [prophetic] book, *Sefer ha-Hayyim*. It was in the tenth year in the month of Av, the fifth month counting from Nissan and the eleventh month counting

¹³ Concerning this composition see M. Idel, *R. Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine*, 11.

¹⁴ The book referred to here is *Sefer ha-'Edut*, one of Abulafia's prophetic works.

¹⁵ Abulafia wrote commentaries on his own (now lost in their original form) prophetic works, but in reverse order of their composition.

¹⁶ Raziel = Abraham = 248. This is the most important of the theophoric names that Abulafia adopted for himself, and is ubiquitous especially in his prophetic works.

¹⁷ This statement provides us with one of Abulafia's own testimonies relating to his first experience of revelation in the year 1270, which according to the Jewish calendar occurred 30 years into the sixth millennium (5030).

¹⁸ The reference is to Capua.

¹⁹ This means that he left Barcelona—but not Spain—in the year 1271. See below, note 44.

from Tishrei, that he arrived in Rome intending to go on the eve of Rosh ha-Shanah before the Pope.^{20, 21}

According to Abulafia, he started to compose his prophetic books in Patros [Patras], Greece, where he had a revelation similar in content to the one he had experienced nine years earlier while he was still in Barcelona, when he had started to study Kabbalah. Nevertheless, despite this earlier revelation, which it would seem constituted a formative experience for both his prophetic and messianic consciousness and his ensuing literary activities, which did include kabbalistic works, he did not produce at the time any prophetic works. It would seem that in the years following his relatively short stay in Barcelona, he experienced additional revelations. The initial composition of his prophetic works bear testimony to a renewal and intensification of these revelations, with an additional meaning, for these revelations also bore a mission for the Kabbalist and now its time was getting closer: he was to seek an audience with the Pope on the Jewish New Year in the year 1280. His leaving Patros, located in the western Peloponnese, and his arrival in the city of Trani in eastern Italy, was part of a more extensive travel plan whose final destination was Rome. We can surmise from here that the city of Patros was the last stop of his second visit to Greece and that prior to this—as we will soon see—there had been visits to two other cities there. As I postulated above, it seems likely that his book *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh* was composed there, and if so then probably in one of these other two cities. It is important to note that Abulafia distinguished between his earlier works on kabbalistic and philosophical subjects and the prophetic works, which he held in greater esteem, viewing them as of a higher caliber. We can assume that he did not distinguish too sharply between the kabbalistic works and the prophetic ones, for there was a third and even higher type of Kabbalah—the revelation of a *Bat Qol*, and even the hybrid expression “Prophetic Kabbalah” testifies to this higher type of Kabbalah as well.²²

²⁰ Concerning Abulafia’s failed attempt to receive an audience with the Pope see my *Chapters in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1990), 51–74 (Hebrew).

²¹ *Sefer ha-’Edut*, Ms. Munich 43, fol. 203b, previously printed according to three manuscript variants in *Studies* (ibid.) pp. 58–59. Compare to *Sefer Matzref ha-Sekhel*, A. Gross edition (Jerusalem, 2001), 57.

²² M. Idel, “On the Meanings of the term “Kabbalah”: Between the Ecstatic and the Sefirotic Schools of Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century,” *Pe’amim* 93 (2003): 39–76 (Hebrew).

Consequently, it is plausible to assume that in comparison to his kabbalistic works composed while still in Spain and maybe one or more in Greece, *Sefer ha-Yashar* was considered by him to be a step up to a new level of creativity in his own literary development. At least in this case we can discern a direct relationship between a revelatory experience and a literary composition that adequately reflects its content.

We will now discuss Abulafia's commentary to his non-extant *Sefer ha-Yashar*, written a few years later, which preserves in it a few phrases of the original book:

Said Raziel: in the thirty-ninth year of the return²³ of the word of 'Adonay YHWH to the mouths of His prophets, the Angel of 'Elohim came to me, I Berakhياهو ben Shalviel,²⁴ and announced a word to me:²⁵ I have already informed you that this is the first book that Raziel composed in the form of prophecy, namely that he mentioned in it [the formula] "Thus has H [namely God] said," which is the form of the word of divine prophecy, which requires a mighty inquiry as to its matter and way. Know that this book is the first of his prophetic works and that this is the sixth and the last of my commentaries on it. The matter of the *Haftarah* is to be considered an addition, similar to an appendix that ends all of the six commentaries, not only the last one, but each and every one of them. Therefore, with God's help in the appendix, I would like to discuss the secret of prophecy. In this [current] book I will not discuss it,²⁶ although it may appear sporadically in a few places, without any proper investigation or order, because this commentary is like no other commentary, not in image nor in form.²⁷ For their Rock is not as our Rock.²⁸ And our Source is not foreign to their Source. But our words are as [deep as] flesh and blood. Whereas their words are as superficial veins and skin. Would their light be kept from evil-doers! Those who seek to harm us in their rooms [in private]. Who scheme how to contradict our words. Has not their Rock sold them? And their Lord shut them up!²⁹

²³ Abulafia means to say that prophecy has returned to Israel. Concerning his use of the plural term "prophets" see my comments in *Messianic Mystics*, 297.

²⁴ Berakhياهو = Abraham = 248, and also Shalviel = Shmuel = 377 as in Abulafia's father's name. For Abulafia's further discussion of this particular name see below.

²⁵ I assume that until this point these words are quoted from the non-extant prophetic work, *Sefer ha-Yashar* and the following is the commentary.

²⁶ Apparently Abulafia did not intend to dwell on the secret of prophecy in this book, but would mention it sporadically.

²⁷ At this juncture the text assumes a rhymed-prose style, a popular medieval literary form known as the *maqama*.

²⁸ Deuteronomy 32: 31.

²⁹ This is a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 32: 30.

Therefore you must investigate the truth of the souls³⁰ of all the Names. Until you know the totality of the *Sefirot*. Of all the thoughts that are thought to unify. On this you shall build all of your thoughts. And to Him shalt thou hold fast and swear by His name.^{31, 32}

We are faced with the question, what is the meaning of the title *Sefer ha-Yashar*, which Abulafia gave to his first book of prophecy? I imagine that there is a connection between this title and Abulafia's self-perception also as an author of a hagiographic work in all senses of the term, including being read in the synagogue after the Torah reading as the Hagiographic Portion of the week or *Haftarah*, hence his last composition was entitled aptly *Sefer ha-Haftarah*.³³ It seems to me that the title, *Sefer ha-Yashar*, alludes to the fact that this first prophetic book is similar in nature to the Torah, and this in my opinion is made clear by a play on words found in *Sefer ha-Yashar: Har Patros = Séfer Torah*.³⁴ A special relationship exists between the concept of Torah and another extant book of prophecy called *ha-Berit ha-Hadashah*, "New Covenant"—reminiscent of the phrase New Testament—Abulafia's fourth book of prophecy. This teaches us that *Sefer ha-Yashar* is the first in a series of unique books to be distinguished from the author's previous kabbalistic works, and that this series exudes pretentiousness exceptional to the Jewish tradition and even the Kabbalah. This hubris seems to be connected to the theophoric names that this Prophetic Kabbalist characteristically called himself in these works, *Raziel* and *Berakhiyahu*. Indeed, it becomes quite clear that Abulafia surmised that he was granted revelations that were to serve as a prototype of a New Torah. The Revealing Angel told the Kabbalist: "For a new Torah I will innovate amongst the holy nation, it is the people of Israel, which is my sublime Name that is like a New Torah. This Name was not explained to my people since the day that I hid my face from them. Although it is a hidden Name it can [now] be explained.

³⁰ The souls = of all the names = the totality of the sefirot = of all the thoughts = that are thought to unify = 841. If we spell the first word of this series, "truth", *amitat*, without its *yod* (a common spelling), then it also possesses a numerical value or *gematria* of 841, and this seems to me to be Abulafia's intention.

³¹ Deuteronomy 10: 20.

³² *Sefer ha-Yashar*, printed in *Sefer Matzref ha-Sekhel*, 95. Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 295–6.

³³ Concerning this composition see Idel, *R. Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine*, 14.

³⁴ *Sefer ha-Yashar*, printed in *Sefer Matzref ha-Sekhel*, 98.

Then he commanded me to hide no more His Name from those who inquire it in truth.”³⁵ Here the New Torah contains a specific content, the identification of a divine Name, although in another work, written many years later, this New Torah is explained in a way that is much closer to the “paths”:

It is known that every letter and every word in the Torah [when written or] pronounced can bear many different meanings, all the more so if we use the paths of [letter] combinations, numerical equivalents [*gematria*], acrostics, permutations, substitutions, substitutions for the substitutions and the like. For then each path widens more and more, by the thousands and the tens of thousands [the possibilities of interpretation] on every single vowel. This path includes the written, spoken and thought [letters of Torah] and no philosopher has ever heard it nor known nor perceived [on his own] a big or small portion of it. And if he had heard of it he could not accept it unless he first cast away all his acquired knowledge, exited his fate and returned to the days of his youth and learned this new Torah.³⁶

It is clear that the New Torah includes the hermeneutical methods mentioned in the beginning of the passage. On the other hand, Abulafia describes his last prophetic work, *Sefer ha-Haftarah*, also as *Sefer ha-Besorah*,³⁷ the title meant to be a pun on the term *Evangelion*, the Christian Gospels, as seemingly an attempt to argue for the superiority of his revelation over the Christian one.

We will now turn to the meaning of the theophoric names, which will become clear from other issues discussed in *Sefer ha-Yashar*, wherein also lies a clue to the meaning of the book’s title:

You should know that Raziel is called in this book Berakhiyahu ben Shalviel, in accordance with the first name,³⁸ and this is because it is known that he received the blessing from the Name, and peace and serenity, as in the beginning and end of the priestly blessing. Every blessing is [divine] influx, which is the opposite of a curse, and all peace is good, which is the opposite of evil. Behold! The word good is male and the word blessing was female gendered and then reverted back to male. Life is good and blessing together—and blessing is the tree of life—

³⁵ *Commentary on Sefer ha-Haftara*, Ms. Rome-Angelica 38, fol. 37a; also printed in *Sefer Matzref ha-Sekhel*, 113. See also M. Idel, “*Torah Hadashah: Messiah and the New Torah in Jewish Mysticism and Modern Scholarship*,” *Kabbalah* 21 (2010): 68–76.

³⁶ *Sefer 'Imrei Shefer*, A. Gross edition, 197. Compare this text to the quote mentioned below from *Sefer 'Even Sappir*.

³⁷ Printed in *Sefer Matzref ha-Sekhel*, 108.

³⁸ In other words, this one is the first of Abulafia’s theophoric names.

and good is life and living.³⁹ Life, blessing, and good cannot exist without God's blessing, His wisdom and His providence. If a man "blesses himself by the God of truth,"⁴⁰ then happy is he and happy is his lot, in this world and in the next. And you should know that Raziel called this book by the title *Sefer ha-Yashar*, whose secret is *Shem ShYRaH*,⁴¹ *YeShaRaH*, *Tefillah*,⁴² because of an incident that happened to him he called it *Tannin*, whose secret hinges on two opposites, in the name of the Attribute of Judgment, by the name of the wise soul.⁴³

It is difficult to ascertain exactly what transpired in Patros that would have prompted Abulafia to use the term "the name of the Tannin" namely Dragon, or the expression "The Attribute of Judgment." It would seem that while he was there he had both positive and negative experiences, hence the use of the term "two opposites." One of the central motifs of his revelation in Patros can be discerned from the following quote:

Then afterwards Raziel saw a vision in which he attained the secret of the Name and the secret of prophecy and the essence of its truth. And he said, at the time Five [H] was to bring him to Dibbon, this was in the sixth year [W] of his departure from Sefarad [Spain],⁴⁴ in the tenth [Y] [month] which is called Tevet, on the fifth [H] day wherein, behold

³⁹ The living = life = and good = 23.

⁴⁰ Isaiah 65: 16.

⁴¹ *Sefer ha-Yashar* = *shem shirah* [= *yesharah*] = *shem ha-Tannin* = *metzayyier she-nei hafakhim* = *be-shem middat ha-Din* = *be-shem ha-Nefesh ha-Hakhamah* = 855.

⁴² *Ha-Yashar* = *yesharah* = *shirah* = *tefillah* = 515.

⁴³ *Sefer ha-Yashar*, printed in *Sefer Matzref ha-Sekhel*, 96. See also Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 295.

⁴⁴ It is evident that we have to distinguish between Abulafia's departure from Barcelona, in circa 1271, and his departure from Spain a few years later, circa 1273 or 1274, after a tour in some towns in Castile, where he taught his Kabbalah to a series of Kabbalists. See also above in the text near footnote 19. Thus six years later, when this passage was written, means 1279, the year when he expressly testifies that he wrote *Sefer ha-Yashar*. Compare, however, the claim of H. Hames, *Like Angels on Jacob's Ladder: Abraham Abulafia, the Franciscans and Joachimism* (Albany, 2007), 7, 31, 39, 40, 71, that situates this revelation in 1276, assuming that Abulafia left Spain in 1271, and built an entire intellectually fascinating construct, predicated on the importance of this alleged revelation which took place, according to him, in 1276, and upon an assumption that Abulafia, perhaps, was then in Sicily. According to this text, however, he was for five years elsewhere, most probably in Patros and beforehand in two other cities in the region, as mentioned in one of the following quotes, namely in Euthryo, and Thebes. Therefore, I do not find it possible to presuppose a stay in Sicily in the seventies, an issue that dramatically calls into question the construct about Abulafia's putative acquaintance with Joachimism or Franciscans before his arrival in Italy for the second time, in 1279.

the secret of the Name was revealed. Also *Patros, sefirot, shemot*,⁴⁵ and this [wordplay] continued and he mentioned the blessing. And then he began [to reveal the secret of] the Name, said Raziel: And YY 'Elohai [My God] sent His angel before me and showed me "the paths of His Name."⁴⁶ And I saw from it ten visions of 'Elohim, the tenth vision as the first vision and the voice of Shaddai going forth from between them, and I feared greatly when I heard the voice. And ten words did I understand from one voice and seven languages in each and every one.⁴⁷ ... Combine them and know them, the ten paths of the Name.⁴⁸ He explained to him their secrets and instruct thus that the being of the perfect man in actuality is of three worlds. Now three by three using multiplication is nine, and one remains, either the tenth or the first, and it is with the three and they are with him, all told they are nine visions, and one that is ten, and one that is all. And the speech is heard from all of them, and they all revolve to and fro and the median between them⁴⁹ is the unique word. This is hinted [in the verse] "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me."⁵⁰ "*Va-tashet 'alai khapekhah*", *va-ta'ash Telyi hafekhakh*,⁵¹ ... This is the secret of *gemulo 'imanu* [his retribution is with us] and *'am 'amusei baten*, and know it! This number is understood [to be derived] from 28, 19, and it is hinted at [in the verse] "for he has shut their eyes, that they cannot see, and their hearts, that they cannot understand."^{52, 53}

Abulafia claims to have experienced a revelation at Patros, where he arrived around 1278. The resort to the ten paths of utilizing the divine Name for attaining prophecy seems to be related to the mentioning of Dibbon, found at the beginning of the above quote (which is apparently the name of a city) and the revelation of the divine Name. We are now faced with the question: what is the meaning of the terms "the divine Name" or "the paths of His name"? I would like to emphasize

⁴⁵ *Patros = sefirot = shemot = 746*.

⁴⁶ This expression also appears further on in this quotation, its meaning being the technical use of the letters of the Names of God in order to achieve prophecy. In other works Abulafia uses this term and similar terms like "the paths of Names" to signify technical use of the Name. See especially the quote discussed below from his *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*.

⁴⁷ In other words, he means he heard a total of seventy voices.

⁴⁸ *Darkhei shemo = ha-'asarah = 580*.

⁴⁹ This phrase is from *Sefer Yetzirah* 3:1.

⁵⁰ Psalms 139: 5.

⁵¹ These are combinations of letters of the preceding verse. *Telyi*, an entity found in *Sefer Yetzirah*, is understood here as the inverse of God.

⁵² Isaiah 44: 18.

⁵³ *Sefer ha-Yashar*, printed in *Sefer Matzref ha-Sekhel*, ed. A. Gross, 98. The details of the vision are quite complex and necessitate a special analysis which cannot be done in this framework.

that in the above quotation we find three recurring themes: the number ten, letter combinations, and the paths of the divine Name. Even though our prophetic Kabbalist's words here are enigmatic and seem inscrutable, I would like to clarify the details of his revelation in Patros by comparing them to another of his statements, written not more than a year later. In *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, composed in Rome in the year 1280, Abulafia writes:

And this is the path that you should give over to him.⁵⁴ Write for him ten Names that are combined one after the other, and thus you should interpret them for him—according to the interpretations that you see in this book. And you should make him give you his oath concerning his receiving [this tradition] that he should protect it, and these are the ten Names... behold, I have already written for you ten words of the Name of seventy-two letters, and they are explained by way of the Kabbalah. You should understand through this matter each word clearly, and know that among the holy wisdoms there is none other like this wisdom, for it is the holy of holies and the ultimate purpose of all the ways that man can possibly reach the knowledge of the Name, perception of His actions, recognition of His ways and His attributes. For His Names, the Exalted [One], they are the very closest things to Him, and they are the truths of His Torah.⁵⁵

The importance of “the path” namely, or this particular method for his Kabbalah is underscored in another place in the same composition:

The path that you should hold by and stick to all the days [of your life] is the path of rearranging letters and their [re-]combinations. Understand its meaning and you will keep eternal happiness, and this happiness will inspire you in your heart to [perform] more combinations, increasing your happiness and joy. Hurry to turn [*hafokh*]⁵⁶ [invert the letters] as

⁵⁴ To the student.

⁵⁵ A. Gross edition (Jerusalem, 1999), 118.

⁵⁶ The verb *hafokh* (literally meaning turn around, figuratively as rearranging letters to make new words) expresses the transformative power of the method of letter combinations in Abulafia's thought. Concerning the “spiritual revolution” that appears in another text of Abulafia's see below footnotes 76, 88. An additional text that can contribute to our understanding of the centrality of this verb for Abulafia can be found in his *Sefer 'Or ha-Sekhel*, A. Gross edition (Jerusalem, 2002), 50, where the practice of letter substitutions are described by use of the verb *hafokh*. In this text Abulafia deals with the understanding of man as an inverted tree and an inverted angel: “For the secret of the ineffable Name commands us thus: “invert His upright Name—make upright His inverted Name.” And the secret is because man is an inverted tree, I mean to say an inverted angel, created by means of the blade of the turning sword, and this secret you will find explicitly if you combine these three holy Names, which are the three heads of existence.” In my opinion, the secret of inversion [*ha-hippukh*] or the

the blade of the revolving sword turns in all directions to wage war on the enemies that surround it. For the imaginings and the images⁵⁷ of idle thoughts which are born from the spirit of the evil inclination, they go forth to meet the reckoning [method, *Heshbon*]⁵⁸ at first they surround it like murderers, attempting to confuse the minds of earthly men, this is because of the sin of Adam and Eve.⁵⁹

The three themes that we listed above from *Sefer ha-Yashar*, which relate to the content of Abulafia's revelation in Patros, also appear in the first quote from *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*. Although the later book does not mention a revelation from above as the source of these specific contents, it does claim for its source an oral tradition handed down from a master to his student. Nevertheless, it seems to me that these two excerpts share another subject, one that is not immediately apparent. They both speak of the Divine Name, but only the second text explicitly states the identity of this Name: we refer to the divine Name of seventy-two letters, which forms the core of Abulafia's most interesting book, and one of his most influential works as well. In contrast, the divine Name of seventy-two letters does not play any significant role in his *Sefer ha-Yashar*. In spite of this fact, it appears that we can find an allusion to this Name in the quote above from *Sefer ha-Yashar*. I refer to the word "Dibbon," which even though it denotes a city, probably another reference to the city of Patros, [actually] the sum of its letters in *gematria* equals seventy-two.⁶⁰ If my assumption

method of deconstructing the letters is to be understood, since it appears in many places in the context of *sefirot*, as pointing to the direction of the complex influx as it is received by the Kabbalist. Compare to Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, 172. On the source of the image of the revolving sword in Maimonides's works, see *ibid.*, 173 note 123.

⁵⁷ The word used here is *tziyyur* (conceptualization) no doubt a play on words meant to show its similarity to the word used further on in the same sentence *yetzer* (instinct or inclination).

⁵⁸ This term conveys in a large part the kabbalistic techniques used by Abulafia. See M. Idel, "The Battle of the Urges: Psychomachia in the Prophetic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia," in *Peace and War in Jewish Culture*, ed., A. bar-Levav (Jerusalem, 2006), 99–143, (Hebrew).

⁵⁹ *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, Ms. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582, fol. 31a.

⁶⁰ Note Abulafia's use of the seventy-two letter Name, which is worked out to be equivalent to 216, when he explains in this manner the name of the island of Sicily as "the island of Seeing" (*'iy ha-Re'i*) or "the island of Power" (*'iy ha-Gevurah*) [The three verses of seventy-two letters each from which derives the seventy-two letter name (Exodus 14, 19–21) = *ha-re'yi* = *gevurah* = 216]. Compare this to the alternative explanation offered by Harvey Hames, who finds in the name *'iy ha-Re'i* an acrostic reference to the land of Israel. Based on this acrostic solution Hames constructs an interpretation of Abulafia's hermeneutics as having been influenced by the thought of Joachim of Fiore. As we have shown above, Abulafia's conception of a "New Torah"

concerning the esoteric content of the revelation in Patros is correct, that it would be disclosed later in Rome within the comprehensive and detailed structure of his book *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, then it was in the Peloponnese that the seed was sown for the central work of this prophetic Kabbalist. It is interesting that it was in Patros that Abulafia experienced a recurrence of a previous revelation, which took place in Barcelona almost a decade beforehand, which commanded him to journey to Rome for an audience with the Pope and also contained the germination of the book he was to write while in Patros.

We will now describe the activities of this Prophetic Kabbalist in Greece, during the years before he reached Patros around 1278. According to *Sefer ha-Yashar*, it would seem that Abulafia sojourned in Patros for five years, and since he left Spain in 1273 he could only have stayed in the other two cities for a total of two years. This is 'an excerpt from Abulafia's short autobiographical travelogue:

I have also taught it in many places: in Capua to four by accident who strayed from the fold, for they were youths lacking in knowledge so I left them. In Thebes there were ten and not one of them succeeded, rather they lost both paths—the first as well as the second. Four in Euthrypo and also without any success, for opinions very much differ between people, all the more so [when concerning] the depths of wisdom and the secrets of the Torah. I did not discern in them anyone who was worthy to receive even the chapter headings of the truth as it is.⁶¹

The reference concerning the four students in Capua can be substantiated by checking the manuscript version of *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, as well as Abulafia's *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, which is dedicated to these same four students.⁶² Yet the continuation of this sentence, as printed by A. Jellinek, "and in their midst ten" is a difficult reading: How is it possible that among his four students, who were according to Abulafia all weak, there were ten more? Further scrutiny of the manuscript version renders instead of "and in their midst ten"—"and in Tibezen ten", which is in medieval Hebrew the customary way of spelling the Greek city of Thebes. Similarly, the word "Azrifo," also printed by Jellinek

was formulated before he ever came to Sicily, in fact it appears in his *Sefer ha-Yashar* written in Patros. See H. Hames, "From Calabria Cometh the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Sicily: The Holy Land in the Thought of Joachim of Fiore and Abraham Abulafia," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 20/2 (2005): 187–99.

⁶¹ *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, ed. Gross, pp. 368–369. Compare to Jellinek's version, printed in *Beit ha-Midrash*, Vol. 3, XLI.

⁶² See *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, A. Gross edition (Jerusalem, 2002), 17–8.

and subsequently copied by other scholars, must be corrected according to the manuscript version to read 'BRYPW, Euthrypo—the correct name for one of the Peloponnese straits. This teaches us that Abulafia had fourteen students while in Greece, all of whom in his opinion were of poor caliber. Accordingly he claims explicitly that he did not give over to them by oral tradition the “chapter headings.” Ostensibly this proves that even if he did teach Maimonides's *Guide* in Greece, he did not give over its secrets to his students, while he did in fact possess esoteric traditions during this period, the 70s of the thirteenth century.

However, Abulafia's words deserve deeper investigation. Immediately following his mention of his four students in Euthrypo he writes, “for opinions very much differ between people, all the more so [when concerning] the depths of wisdom and the secrets of the Torah.” Moreover, after he mentions his students in Thebes he states, “rather they lost both paths, the first as well as the second.” It stands to reason that in fact Abulafia did teach two paths to his students in Thebes, even though they lost them, in other words they were beyond their comprehension. It would seem that the second path refers to Abulafia's unique method of reading the *Guide* according to his own understanding, through the principles of the Linguistic-Prophetic Kabbalah that were characteristic of him. This interpretative method, which concerned the secrets of the *Guide*, was recorded in three separate commentaries that Abulafia composed on the *Guide*, at least the first of which, *Sefer Ge'eulah*, was written in 1273, sometime before his return to Greece.⁶³ It is likely that Abulafia dedicated *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, probably his second commentary, to his students in Thebes. Now this suggestion does seem illogical: Why would Abulafia dedicate his book to people who he himself describes as “not one of them succeeded”? However this question is invalidated by the fact that his third commentary on Maimonides's *Guide*, *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, was dedicated to his students in Capua, of whom afterwards he described as those who have “strayed from the fold.” Consequently, we are informed that aspersions cast on former students does not preclude the possibility that at a certain stage of their instruction Abulafia did not totally desist from revealing to them the secrets of the *Guide*. If we compare the

⁶³ See C. Wirszubski, *Between the Lines: Kabbalah, Christian Kabbalah and Sabbatianism*, ed., M. Idel (Jerusalem, 1990), 34–48 (Hebrew).

number of students who heard Abulafia's teachings in Greece to those in Italy and Spain, we will easily ascertain that it was in Greece that Abulafia's teachings were more readily accepted. Even in Sicily, where Abulafia resided for the last decade of his life and where he enjoyed, in his own opinion, great success, we cannot count more than eight students. This demonstrates that it was especially in Greece that Abulafia found fertile soil for his activities.

The question arises: did the fact that Abulafia spend on his second visit at least six years in Greece have any impact on his Kabbalah? There are two areas of interest pertinent to this inquiry: can we detect any influences stemming in general from the surrounding Greek culture? Secondly, can we entertain the possibility that Abulafia's Kabbalah was influenced by the specific brand of mysticism that was indigenous to Greece, namely the Greek Orthodox mystical movement known as Hesychasm? The answer to the first question is emphatically positive; more than any other Kabbalist, maybe even more than all the Kabbalists put together, Abulafia uses Greek words in his works.⁶⁴ On this subject, the Greek background to Abulafia's writing is exceedingly clear. In regard to the second question, perhaps there are indeed resemblances to be found between certain issues in Abulafia's Kabbalah and in the writings of one of his students to Hesychastic Mysticism.⁶⁵

The question of how deeply Abulafia's Kabbalah influenced the development of the Kabbalah in general and in the Byzantine Empire in particular still remains a desideratum for intensive research. In order to measure his impact on one geographical area or another, one would first have to identify the Kabbalists who penned works considered to belong to the Prophetic Kabbalah, for example; *Sefer ha-Tzeruf*, *Sefer Ner 'Elohim*, *Sefer 'Or ha-Menorah*, *Hakdamah*, *Sefer ha-Rehavah*, *The Anonymous Commentary on the Maimonidean Thirteen Principles of Faith*, as well as other extant works.⁶⁶ We still do not even know where these books were composed, except maybe at least in the last case, the *Anonymous Commentary*, where it can be argued that its provenance is Greek, since it was copied [verbatim] into *Sefer 'Even Sappir*

⁶⁴ This subject deserves a separate study. See my *Messianic Mystics*, 302.

⁶⁵ Idem, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. J. Chipman, (Albany, 1988), in Foreword, see also 14, 24, 35, 40, 52n, 80, 121, 177n.

⁶⁶ Idem, *R. Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine*, 69–75, 78–80.

by R. Elnatan ben Moshe Qalqish, composed in Constantinople.⁶⁷ In any event, it is evident that a sizable portion of Abulafia's *oeuvre* was copied into Byzantine manuscripts, if we can judge by the provenance of the manuscripts, and this would support the claim that the Ecstatic Kabbalah continued to interest people in the Byzantine Empire well after Abulafia's departure, as was also the case in Sicily.⁶⁸

The greatest impact of Abulafia's Kabbalah is to be found in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, as Jellinek has already noted the fact that this anonymous Kabbalist copied into his work almost all of Abulafia's *Sefer Gan Na'ul*, and also included several long quotes from his *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*.⁶⁹ We have mentioned above the latter work: the former was written for an anonymous Kabbalist or student with whom Abulafia corresponded. Since this book exists in relatively few manuscripts, three in fact, it would seem that perhaps the author of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* used a copy belonging to a relative or a follower of Abulafia's correspondent. However, going beyond the fact of the verbatim copying of Abulafia's works by the author of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, this book also contains many discussions written in the vein of the Prophetic Kabbalah, and even when we cannot find direct quotes from this literature, there is extensive use of *gematria*, letter-combinations, and other concepts that are congruent with Abulafia's Kabbalah.⁷⁰

In addition to the direct traces of Abulafia's Kabbalah itself, the influence of post-Abulafian Prophetic Kabbalah is recognizable in Byzantium. This is already evident in the book *Sefer 'Even Sappir*, which quotes a portion of *Liqqutei ha-Ran*, whose author is identifiable, in my opinion, as R. Natan ben Sa'adyah Har'ar, one of Abulafia's

⁶⁷ The *Anonymous Commentary* is extant in several manuscripts, e.g., Ms. Oxford-Bodleiana 2360, and quoted in *Sefer 'Even Sappir*, Ms. Paris, National Library 728, fol. 154b. This composition will be discussed below.

⁶⁸ The special affinity between the convert-translator Flavius Mithridates, who was born and grew up as a Jew on the island of Sicily, and Abulafia's Kabbalah is an important testimony to the continuity of Prophetic Kabbalah on the island, at least until the middle of the fifteenth century. On this subject see M. Idel, "The Ecstatic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia in Sicily and its Transmission during the Renaissance," *Italia Judaica V* (1995): 330–40 (especially pp. 337–9).

⁶⁹ See Jellinek, *Beit ha-Midrash*, Vol. 3, XLIV; also see Idel, *Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine*, 11; M. Kushnir-Oron, *The Sefer Ha-Peli'ah and the Sefer Ha-Kanah: Their Kabbalistic Principles, Social and Religious Criticism and Literary Composition*, (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1980), 75–80 (Hebrew).

⁷⁰ See for instance fols. 70a–b, 71a–b, and others.

students and most possibly a teacher of R. Isaac of Acre.⁷¹ The book *Sefer Shushan Sodot* explicitly displays within it the impact of R. Isaac of Acre's Ecstatic Kabbalah, and it also seems influenced by R. Natan mentioned above.⁷² Traces of the writings of these Kabbalists are not recognizable in the literature produced in other centers, including Spain, and we will return to this observation in the following pages.

III. SEFER HA-TEMUNAH AND ITS LITERARY CIRCLE

Despite the above survey, to understand the development of the Kabbalah in the Byzantine Empire exclusively in terms of the dissemination of the Prophetic-Ecstatic Kabbalah would only yield a very partial picture. Another stream of the Kabbalah, also of Spanish provenance, flourished in an exceptional manner in the Byzantine Empire. We are referring to a very specific type of kabbalistic literature, completely different from the Prophetic Kabbalah, whose central teachings include the transmigration of souls or *gilgul* and the doctrine of cosmic cycles or *shemittot*, the most well-known representative of this literature being *Sefer ha-Temunah* [*The Book of the Figure*].⁷³ An important question still to be resolved concerning the development of the Kabbalah in general would be to ascertain the geographical location and date of the composition of *Sefer ha-Temunah*. The premise that this book was composed in Gerona sometime during the middle of the thirteenth century, as G. Scholem opined for most of his life and on this basis charted the historical development of the Kabbalah, is lacking in hard bibliographical evidence.

It seems that the first person to ponder the possible identity of the author of the *Sefer ha-Temunah* was the Safedian Kabbalist R. Moshe Cordovero. In his composition entitled *Shi'ur Qomah* he wrote concerning *Sefer ha-Temunah*: "We do not know who the author of this book is, except that we received a tradition that these are the words of

⁷¹ About this author see *Natan ben Sa'adyah Harar, Le Porte della Giustizia, Sha'arei Sedeq*, ed., M. Idel, trans., M. Mottolese (Adelphi, 2001).

⁷² To be discussed below in section 7.

⁷³ On the subject of other compositions related to the *Sefer ha-Temunah* see G. Scholem, "The Secret of the Tree of Emanation of R. Isaac: A Work (*quntres*) Stemming from the Kabbalistic Tradition of the *Sefer ha-Temunah*," *Qovetz 'Al-Yad*, New Series Vol. 5 (1951): 64–70, (Hebrew); about the book itself see E. Gottlieb, *Studies in the Kabbala Literature*, ed., J. Hacker, (Tel-Aviv, 1976), 570–1 (Hebrew).

R. Isaac the author of the *'Or Zaru'a* and the author of the *Mar'ot ha-Tzove'ot*, *Sefer ha-Gadol*, and the *Sodei Razaiyya*. Since I have listed for you his [other] books go and investigate them, find out for yourself if you can trust his novellae, since he is considered a contemporary scholar."⁷⁴ Gershom Scholem thought that the aforementioned "Rabbi Isaac," the supposed author of *Sefer ha-Temunah*, was mistakenly confused by a copyist with R. Isaac ben Moshe from Vienna, a contemporary jurist who penned a halakhic work also entitled *'Or Zaru'a*, correctly recognizing that Cordovero meant a kabbalistic work penned in medieval Spain by R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid. Nevertheless, Scholem rejected the tradition adduced by R. Moshe Cordovero stating: "it is evident that this tradition is incorrect. There is no doubt that R. David did not compose *Sefer ha-Temunah*, for it was already read by R. Abraham Abulafia and R. Yosef Gikatilla, who quote it, the former in his *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, and the latter in his commentary on the Song of Songs found in Ms. Paris 790, fol. 83b and other places. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that R. David indeed knew this work and was very influenced by it, accepting its doctrine of the cosmic cycles."⁷⁵

This passage, written by Scholem in 1928, served to secure the historical position of *Sefer ha-Temunah* for the new modern scholarship of the Kabbalah. Actually, here Scholem followed in the footsteps of his predecessors, Aharon Jellinek, Marcus Ehrenpreis, and David Neumark,⁷⁶ all of whom concluded for completely different reasons that *Sefer ha-Temunah* was composed during the thirteenth century. Ehrenpreis even proposed that this book was historically related to the kabbalistic doctrines of *Sefer ha-Bahir*, R. Azriel of Gerona, and R. Isaac ben Abraham ibn Latif.⁷⁷ Consequently, we can see that Scholem's conclusion that the provenance of *Sefer ha-Temunah* was Gerona sometime during the thirteenth century was a natural con-

⁷⁴ *Shi'ur Qomah* (Warsaw, 1883), fol. 80a. Indeed, there is a composition attributed to a R. Isaac stemming from this circle entitled, "The Secret of the Tree of Emanation," see the previous note.

⁷⁵ Scholem, "R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid the Grandson of Nahmanides," *Qiryat Sefer* Vol. 4 (1927–1928), 302–27, (Hebrew) see p. 326. See now the updated version in a new collection of Scholem's articles, *Studies in Kabbalah* (1), eds., Y. Ben-Shlomo and M. Idel (Tel-Aviv, 1998), 161, 176.

⁷⁶ See *A History of Philosophy in Israel*, (revised edition, Jerusalem, 1971), 271–6 (Hebrew).

⁷⁷ M. Ehrenpreis, *Die Entwicklung der Emanationslehre in der Kabbala des XIII. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt a.M., 1896), 42–3.

tinuation of an already accepted scholarly view. Accordingly, we find that in Scholem's various formulations of the history of the beginnings of the Kabbalah he would often conclude with a description of this particular book, presumably due to his supposition that it displayed close conceptual ties to the literature of the Geronese Kabbalists. It was not until 1987 when the updated English translation of his *Origins of the Kabbalah* was published, that Scholem revised his opinion and moved the date of composition of *Sefer ha-Temunah* to around 1300, albeit still arguing for its conceptual ties to the Geronese Kabbalah.⁷⁸ However, we must bear in mind that during the long period before the publication of the updated English version of his *Origins*, Scholem's former view of the date and location of the composition of *Sefer ha-Temunah* was the accepted one throughout the academic literature.

The dating of *Sefer ha-Temunah* to the thirteenth century began in the nineteenth century with the publication of Jellinek's *Philosophie und Kabbala*.⁷⁹ In it Jellinek lists this book as one of the sources used by Abulafia since it appears in a composition that I have discussed above, *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*. Jellinek's assumption was accepted by Scholem,⁸⁰ and it would furnish the only solid literary evidence for the dating of *Sefer ha-Temunah*. The argument ran that since Abulafia's *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* was known to have been composed in the year 1280 in Italy, it should provide a firm *terminus ad quem* for the composition of *Sefer ha-Temunah*. Since Abulafia is the only thirteenth-century author to have ever mentioned this book, we should thoroughly investigate his supposed reference to *Sefer ha-Temunah*.

And if you are to be included as one of the true lovers of the Torah's Wisdom, you must pursue this Wisdom until you glean from it the truth of the existence of Man and his essence. [This is learned] from the books of Natural Science, like *Sefer ha-Yetzirah* and *Sefer Temurot*—that are words of our sages, or from the books of the philosophers.⁸¹

⁷⁸ See *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 460–1 and note 233. Compare this to my opinion stated in my recent article "The Jubilee Year in Jewish Mysticism," *Fins de Siècle—End of Ages*, ed., J. Kaplan, (Jerusalem, 2005), 67–98 (Hebrew).

⁷⁹ Jellinek, *Philosophie und Kabbala* (Leipzig, 1853), 43; see also Jellinek, *Quntres Taryag*, (Vienna, 1878), 41.

⁸⁰ See G. Scholem, *Manuscripts of the Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1930), 26 (Hebrew); idem, *The Beginnings of the Kabbalah*, 181 (Hebrew); idem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974), 52.

⁸¹ In the version published by A. Gross, p. 79, we find printed "*Sefer ha-Temunah*"

The reading “*Sefer Temurot*” instead of the printed “*Sefer ha-Temunah*” appears in three reliable manuscript versions of Abulafia’s *Hayyei ha-‘Olam ha-Ba’*: Ms. Paris National Library 777, fol. 111a; Ms. Oxford-Bodleiana 1583, fol. 5b; Ms. London British Library 757, fol. 83a. Other somewhat less reliable manuscript sources, like Ms. Jerusalem National and University Library 8^o 34, fol. 28a, give the reading “*Sefer Temurot Hashem*.” I imagine that this reading was the link that allowed the next variation found in other manuscripts—“*Sefer ha-Temurot*,” which in turn eventually led to a reading which is even closer to that found in the printed version—“*Sefer ha-Temunot*.” Having now shown the accepted reading of *Sefer ha-Temunah* to have been incorrect can we ascertain from the above passage any information concerning the identity of the book Abulafia called “*Sefer Temurot*”? I am inclined to answer in the affirmative; Abulafia is referring to the *Midrash Temurah* or *Temurot*⁸² that is still extant and was compiled apparently sometime during the first half of the thirteenth century. The fact that Abulafia mentions *Sefer Yetzirah* and *Sefer Temurot* together underscores the obvious to anyone who cares to examine the extant *Midrash Temurah*; this Midrash is based on the ideas set forth in *Sefer Yetzirah* on subjects concerning what Abulafia termed the “Natural Science,” as well as focusing on the “essence” of man.⁸³ In contrast, *Sefer ha-Temunah* does not fit the description given by Abulafia in the above passage; it focuses primarily on issues concerning the divine essence—and could not be further from discussing “Natural Science.” It is important to mention that this identification of Abulafia’s reference to *Sefer Temurah* with the *Midrash Temurah* was already noted by R. Abraham the son of the Vilna Gaon in his study of midrashic literature entitled *Rav Pe‘alim*.⁸⁴ Another factor for identifying *Sefer Temurot* is Abulafia’s attribution of the book *Sefer Temurot* to the

⁸² This Midrash has been published a few times, noteworthy is the edition published by S. Wertheimer in his *Batei Midrashot*, Vol. 2, 187–201. On this particular Midrash see Zunz, *Derashot be-Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1947), trans. M. Zak, 295–6, notes 145–7, and p. 57 (Hebrew); B.-Z. Dinur, *Israel in the Diaspora* (Tel-Aviv, 1969), Vol. 1, book 4, p. 211 note 16 (Hebrew); *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 16, col. 1518. See now the edition and Italian translation of M. Perani, *Il Midrash Temurah* (Bologna, 1986), especially pp. 58–63.

⁸³ A detailed comparison between the *Sefer Yetzirah* and the *Midrash Temurah* was undertaken by Perani, *Il Midrash Temurah*, 40–1.

⁸⁴ (Warsaw, 1894), 123–4. R. Abraham errs when he gives the date of Abulafia’s composition of *Sefer Hayyei ha-‘Olam ha-Ba’* as being 1453. He was misled by a reference from a manuscript belonging to David Oppenheimer, apparently one of those

“words of the sages,” which is corroborated by the extant *Midrash Temurah* ascribed to the sages R. Akiva and R. Ishmael. Also noteworthy is the fact that traces of this Midrash are to be found in other works dating from around the period of the composition of Abulafia’s *Sefer Hayyei ha-‘Olam ha-Ba’*; R. Levi ben Abraham mentions it in his *Sefer Livyat Hen*,⁸⁵ later R. Menahem ha-Meiri in his commentary to the Tractate *‘Avot*,⁸⁶ and there is a distinct possibility that R. Bahiya ben Asher, a late thirteenth-century renowned author, also knew of this Midrash.⁸⁷ Thus, we have shown that this passage from Abulafia does not refer to *Sefer ha-Temunah*, although the relationship of its circle to Abulafia’s literary legacy is worth close scrutiny. In my opinion, the *Commentary on the Seventy-Two Names*, another work belonging to this circle, was compiled after Abulafia’s time and apparently under his influence, as is corroborated by the fact that a passage from *Sefer Hayyei ha-‘Olam ha-Ba’* appears as the introduction to the *Commentary* printed in *Sefer Raziel ha-Mal’akh*.⁸⁸ Another case of a [possible] citation of *Sefer ha-Temunah* in the work of a thirteenth-century Kabbalist was also overturned. E. Gottlieb has shown that an extant *Commentary on the Song of Songs* that quotes *Sefer ha-Temunah* was spuriously attributed to R. Joseph Gikatilla, a thirteenth-century Castillian Kabbalist, and he entertains the possibility that the copyist R. Shem Tov ibn Foliyya might even have been its true author.⁸⁹

Confronted with firm evidence of the unreliability of the two supposed references to *Sefer ha-Temunah*, Scholem changed his mind and revised its date of composition to the late thirteenth century, but still held that it reflected the *Weltanschauung* of Geronese Kabbalah.⁹⁰ However, it seems that *Sefer ha-Temunah* was never mentioned by any of the Kabbalists active on the Iberian Peninsula before the Expulsion. In light of this fact, it is singularly important to note that the first two writers to quote the actual *Sefer ha-Temunah* hailed from the

now found in the Bodleiana Library at Oxford. See also Y. Eisenstein, ed., *‘Otzar ha-Midrashim*, (New York, 1915), Vol. 2, p. 580.

⁸⁵ Ms. Oxford-Bodlian 1285, fols. 72b–73a; Ms. Munich 58, fol. 59a, where the Midrash is called “*Sefer ha-Temurot*.”

⁸⁶ Introduction, fol. 15b; Eisenstein, *‘Otzar ha-Midrashim*, 580.

⁸⁷ See Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, Vol. 2, p. 188.

⁸⁸ See *Sefer ‘Otzar ha-Raviyah* of Elyakim Milzahagi where he correctly proves that this passage in *Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh* is from *Sefer Hayyei ha-‘Olam ha-Ba’*, although he errs when he attributed other passages in it to the pen of Abulafia.

⁸⁹ *Studies in the Kabbala Literature*, 117–21.

⁹⁰ *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 460–1 and note 233, [see note 78].

Byzantine Empire—the author of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* and the author of *Commentary on the Song of Songs* spuriously attributed to R. Joseph Gikatilla. Both of these works were copied by R. Shem Tov ibn Foliyya, probably in the city of Negropont, as Gottlieb already suggested.⁹¹ On the other hand, I have argued in some of my previous studies for positing strong ties between R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi and his circle and *Sefer ha-Temunah*.⁹² As we shall see, this Ashkenazi Kabbalist exerted a strong influence on this book and its adjoining commentary, as well as on *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*.

Taken together, the absence of any reference to *Sefer ha-Temunah* in Spain and its first appearance in Byzantine kabbalistic literature leads to a tentative assessment of its time and place of composition—sometime around the middle of the fourteenth century in the Byzantine Empire, between 1335–1345. The fact that this book eventually became a classic of kabbalistic literature was due to developments within kabbalistic thought that occurred only after the Expulsion from Spain. Prior to this period, not a trace of this book can be detected in any Spanish kabbalistic writings.⁹³

All that we have said concerning *Sefer ha-Temunah* mostly holds true as well for its commentaries, which in turn exerted their influence on the author of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* and others belonging to this literary circle.⁹⁴ In fact, we can perceive a distinct continuity of ideas stemming from R. Joseph Ashkenazi, passing on to *Sefer ha-Temunah* and then

⁹¹ *Studies in the Kabbala Literature*, 117–21. About this author see also J. Hacker, “The Emigration of Spanish Jewry to the land of Israel and their Ties to it During the Years 1391–1492,” *Shalem* (Jerusalem, 1974), Vol. 1, pp. 133–7 (Hebrew).

⁹² See for instance, M. Idel, “The Meaning of *Ta'amei Ha-'Ofot Ha-Teme'im* of Rabbi David ben Yehuda He-Hasid,” in *'Aleï Shefer: Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexandre Safran*, ed., M. Hallamish (Ramat Gan, 1990), 18–21 (Hebrew); idem, “R. David ben Yehuda he-Hasid's Commentary on the Alphabet,” *'Aleï Sefer*, Vol. 10 (1982), 26 and the notes therein. Also see H. Pedaya, *Nahmanides: Cyclical Time and Holy Text*, (Tel-Aviv, 2003), 110–3, 212, 228 note 1.

⁹³ I will add that the collection of compositions that were copied by R. Shem Tov ibn Foliyya, or according to another conjecture perhaps were even composed by him, are of utmost importance and to be understood as a prime indication of the intellectual climate that prevailed during the generation wherein the *Sefer ha-Kanah* and *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* were composed, and there is still much research to be done before this matter is concluded. I will mention one small detail, which in my opinion is very important, that in one of the manuscripts that R. Shem Tov copied there is a page, written by another hand, that contains the preface to the *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, and I doubt whether this is merely a coincidence. Compare this to note 127 below.

⁹⁴ Kushnir-Oron, *Sefer Ha-Peli'ah and the Sefer Ha-Kanah: Their Kabbalistic Principles*, 83.

afterwards to its commentary, all the way through to *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*. This succession bears testimony to the singular development of one branch of R. Joseph Ashkenazi's Kabbalah, the one that did not opt to include within it the Zoharic type of Kabbalah, as did the other branch, represented by R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid. Also in contrast to R. David, who highly esteemed R. Joseph Ashkenazi's theory of the sublime lights or *tzahtzahot* and went on to develop it in his own writings, *Sefer ha-Temunah* largely ignored this doctrine. Efraim Gottlieb was the first to notice that the doctrine of *shemittot*, particular to *Sefer ha-Temunah*, as well as a reference to it by name, appears in two other works copied in the Byzantine Empire: *The Commentary on the Song of Songs* spuriously attributed to R. Joseph Gikatilla and a treatise on kabbalistic *Sodot*; both of which were copied or even perhaps composed by R. Shem Tov ibn Foliyya.⁹⁵ I am of the opinion that these two works belong to the aforementioned first Byzantine branch of R. Joseph Ashkenazi's type of Kabbalah.

As we have seen, the two "solid" proofs that allowed for a mid-thirteenth century dating for the composition of *Sefer ha-Temunah* in Spain have been refuted. In the absence of direct evidence, all of the subsequent research relied on Scholem's supposition that *Sefer ha-Temunah* influenced the writing of R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, as a fact. Indeed, as the tradition adduced by R. Moshe Cordovero in the passage quoted above attests, there is certainly an affinity between a doctrine of cosmic cycles or *shemittot* characteristic of R. David's writings and one that is also found in *Sefer ha-Temunah*. This influence or borrowing was assumed by scholars to be due to the fact that R. David is notorious for seemingly appropriating kabbalistic sources as his own, sometimes even when the passage is of sizable proportion. Nevertheless, I have not found one single verbatim quote from *Sefer ha-Temunah*, or for that matter any of the literature of this book's circle, in the writings of R. David or of his teacher R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi.⁹⁶ On the contrary, we can

⁹⁵ *Studies in the Kabbala Literature*, 117–21.

⁹⁶ Compare to M. Hallamish, "Towards an Assessment of the Influence of *Sefer Ha-Bahir* on the Kabbalist R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi," *Bar-Ilan Year Book*, 7–8 (1969–1970), 233 (Hebrew); idem, *A Kabbalistic Commentary of Rabbi Yoseph Ben Shalom Ashkenazi on Genesis Rabbah*, (Jerusalem, 1984), Introduction, 13, 21 (Hebrew); G. Vajda, "Un chapitre de l'histoire du conflit entre la Kabbale et la philosophie: la polemique anti-intellectualiste de Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi de Catalogne," *AHDMLA* 23 (1956): 55, 59; D. Matt, *The Book of Mirrors: Sefer Mar'ot ha-Zove'ot by*

assume the opposite type of development, namely that the writings of these Kabbalists exerted their influence upon the unknown author of *Sefer ha-Temunah*. I would like to point out that in a few manuscripts *Sefer ha-Temunah* is bound following *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* composed by R. Joseph Ashkenazi. Statistically speaking, however, this is not very significant, since these are both ubiquitous compositions, for the most part found separately in many manuscripts. There are some manuscripts of *Sefer ha-Temunah* which display a phenomenon almost exclusive to the kabbalistic works of R. David and R. Joseph; above certain words appear abbreviated notations that are references to the names of specific *Sefirot*.⁹⁷ This phenomenon explicitly shows the affinity between *Sefer ha-Temunah* and the works of these two Kabbalists. This same phenomenon of notation is also found in a few manuscripts of *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*, to be discussed later, and these manuscript witnesses were found bound with material belonging to R. Joseph Ashkenazi and *Sefer ha-Temunah*. Pertinent to our discussion is the observation that the tendency of combining astrological elements within the theosophical system of the *sefirot*, so pronounced in the works of R. Joseph Ashkenazi, also appears in *Sefer ha-Temunah*. To demonstrate one clear conceptual affinity to the Kabbalah of R. Joseph Ashkenazi, we will quote a passage from *Sefer ha-Temunah*:

All is hidden in the secrets of the ten sublime *Sefirot* of *belimah* . . . within the [divine] attributes [*Middot*] that allude to everything, which are [also] called the "chapter headings," including the language of the ministering angels, all their speech in it [namely the language]. And from them are derived every name [of every being] in the upper worlds, the living beings, seraphim, *'ofanim*, angels, heavenly spheres and the stars. All that is necessary for human language, all names, speech and expression, since they allude to and are divided between the attributes. For each attribute encodes some names, things, and matters which derive from it, for all is included within that measure. Also the angels' language, words and matters, are all encoded in one *Sefirah*, from whose quality all those

R. David ben Yehudah *he-Hasid* (Providence, 1982), 32–3; H. Pedaya, "Shabbat, Sabatai and the Shrinking of the Moon—the Holy Union: Letter and Figure," in *Myth in Judaism*, ed., H. Pedaya, (Beer-Sheva, 1996), 173–91 (Hebrew). Concerning the writings of this Kabbalist see G. Scholem's quintessential article, "The True Author of the Commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* Attributed to the RaBa"D and his Works," *Studies in Kabbalah* (1), 112–36.

⁹⁷ On the subject of this phenomenon see M. Idel, "R. David ben Yehudah *he-Hasid*'s translation of the *Sefer ha-Zohar*," *'Alei Sefer* 8 (1980): 63–6, 72–3 (Hebrew); idem, "Kabbalistic Prayer and Colors," in *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times*, ed., D. Blumenthal, Vol. III, (Atlanta, 1988), 17–27.

entities are derived, as we find in the Kabbalah from the wise Kabbalists, who understood all this from the Prophets and the Sacred Writings, which instruct this matter by verses known to the wise. And these are called the chapter headings, for they are the limbs of the [divine] body and the *Sefirot*, which are in the image of man, for man is a microcosm.⁹⁸

The underlying conception expressed in this passage is the centrality of the *Middot* or the *Sefirot*, which are considered to be the source of various modalities: language or even languages, mankind as well as the angels, the world of the angels, the heavenly spheres and the stars. Concomitantly, there exist correlations between certain biblical verses and their particular *Sefirah*. Understandably, the main symbol denoting the entire sefirotic system, alluded to in the above passage, is the “image of man,” which served as the organizing principle for discussion of the nature of the *Sefirot*. Of utmost importance for our discussion is the expression, repeated twice in the above passage and often throughout the book *Sefer ha-Temunah*—the “chapter headings” (*roshei pera'iqim*). According to ancient Jewish traditional sources, this is the classic expression for the content of the oral transmission of secret lore. In that context the term refers to the secrets of the Torah, whereas in our context it has a threefold meaning: “chapter headings” sometimes refers to key biblical verses, sometimes connotes specific limbs of the human body, and sometimes to the *Sefirot*, since they are considered as the categories or starting points of a process that ultimately generates other complex systems. Compare this exceptional usage of the term “chapter headings” with a passage from R. Joseph ben Shalom ha-'Arokh Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer Yezirah*:

Behold in these seven degrees you will find all the power of the seven planets. How the power emanates to them from the power of the Name Y-H-V-H and the ten *Sefirot* from the power of the forty-two letter Name, they are the chapter headings. And when you search the biblical text you will find that each and every verse of the Torah is a chapter heading, imbued with power, and it (i.e. the Torah) should always be in front of your eyes, through them (i.e. the verses) the future is made known, in the Name of Y-H-V-H 'aDoNaY may He be blessed.⁹⁹

The actual meaning of the expression “chapter headings” is delineated in a chart found in the *Commentary*. It divides the combinations of the divine Name that consists of forty-two letters into seven parts, each

⁹⁸ *Sefer ha-Temunah*, fol. 25a; for the Ms. version see fols. 32b–33a.

⁹⁹ *Commentary on Sefer Yezirah*, fol. 53b.

one of them governing a different heaven, planet, seven year cycle, jubilee year, and organs of the human head. As the above passage demonstrates, the “chapter headings” are related to biblical verses; according to the chart they are also tied to human limbs as well as *Sefirot* and *shemitot*. The special way R. Joseph Ashkenazi utilizes the expression “chapter headings,” is reminiscent of *Sefer ha-Temunah*'s usage of the expression and demonstrates their conceptual affinity. The appearance of Greek words in the anonymous commentary on *Sefer ha-Temunah* is noteworthy, as well as in the writings of R. Joseph Ashkenazi, a fact that can denote a Byzantine background of some sort for these authors.¹⁰⁰

Sefer ha-Temunah or as it sometimes called *Sefer ha-Temunot*, is the most important composition of its kind, belonging to a wide spectrum of kabbalistic works that share its world view. A small number of these works were printed as addendums to the book itself, although there are many more extant compositions that display a similar attitude. The most important one is its anonymous *Commentary* printed alongside it. The “Secret of the Tree of Emanation” by R. Isaac,¹⁰¹ as well as the *Commentary on the Pesah Haggadah*, spuriously attributed to R. Moshe de Leon,¹⁰² both belong to the literary output of the circle of *Sefer ha-Temunah*. Three versions of a kabbalistic “Commentary on the Divine Name of Seventy-Two Letters,” which were published in the famous book *Sefer Raziel ha-Mal'akh*, are quite similar in structure to *Sefer ha-Temunah*.¹⁰³

IV. R. ISAIAH BEN JOSEPH HALEVI THE GREEK

The compositions of R. Isaiah ben Joseph the Greek, also sometimes referred to as R. Isaiah “from Thebes,” are mostly buried in manuscript

¹⁰⁰ See *Sefer ha-Temunah*, fol. 58b: “aliqodosis” meaning the wheels of a water mill. Concerning R. Joseph and the Greek language see Y. Liebes, “How the Zohar Was Written,” in *Studies in the Zohar*, trans. S. Nakache (Albany, 1993), 200 note 55. See also now, the reference to *Sefer ha-Temunah* by a Byzantine homilist, discussed by D. Schwartz, “On the Characteristics and the Sources of R. Efrayyim ben Gershon's Sermons,” *Alei Sefer* 21 (2010): 92 (Hebrew).

¹⁰¹ See G. Scholem's edition, “The Secret of the Tree of Emanation of R. Isaac: A Work (*quntres*) Stemming from the Kabbalistic Tradition of the *Sefer ha-Temunah*,” *Qovetz 'Al-Yad*, New Series 5 (1951): 71–102 (Hebrew).

¹⁰² See the printed version in *Haggadah Shelemah: The Complete Passover Haggadah*, M. Kasher, ed., S. Ashkenazi (Jerusalem, 1967), 121–32 (Hebrew).

¹⁰³ (Amsterdam, 1701), fols. 25a–32a.

and are still awaiting thorough analysis.¹⁰⁴ His works were composed sometime towards the end of the first third of the fourteenth century [1325–1335?], and are apparently not all extant since he himself mentions works of a seemingly kabbalistic nature that we do not possess, like his *Sefer Hashkafat ha-Sekhel*. Some of his *oeuvre* was published by Solomon Moshe Mussaioff including, *Sod 'Etz ha-Da'at*, *Sefer 'Otzar ha-Hokhmah*, *Sefer ha-Kavod*, *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh* and *Sefer Gan 'Eden*.¹⁰⁵ R. Isaiah displays a philosophical understanding of the *Heikhalot* literature as well as the Kabbalah, with a clear neoplatonic streak, influenced by Jewish as well as Arabic sources. His writings include two discussions of *Sefer Shi'ur Qomah*. In his *Sefer ha-Kavod* R. Isaiah takes a position similar to that of R. Abraham ibn Ezra¹⁰⁶ when he writes:

For the divine portion [soul] suffuses the whole body, like the Glory of the Revered Name suffuses each [heavenly] sphere, and this is the meaning of the entire *Sefer Shi'ur Qomah* [Book of the Divine Measurements]. When it says about *ha-Shem* that the face of the Holy One Blessed be He is such and such [a measure], and His arms are such and such [an amount of] parasangs, and His legs are such and such [an amount of] parasangs, the intended meaning of these words are that the face is *Keter 'Elyon* [the first *Sefirah*], which provides the influx for the Angels,¹⁰⁷ His arms allude to the [world of the] Angels, His legs allude to the [Heavenly] Spheres, as it is written, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool."¹⁰⁸ This is not [to say] that God has a body or that He possesses a face or arms or legs or thighs, Heaven forbid! These words are hints at intellectual entities and [as we already know] great mountains are suspended by [only] a hair.¹⁰⁹

The use of the term "*Keter 'Elyon*" should not lead to any misunderstandings: R. Isaiah does not demonstrate in his writings a classical theosophical conception of the *Sefirot*. He consistently identifies the *Sefirot* with the Separate Intellects, whom he also calls Angels,¹¹⁰ and so *Sefer Shi'ur Qomah* is viewed by him as an allegory alluding to

¹⁰⁴ For the time being see G. Scholem, "Manuscripts of the Kabbalah," *Qiryat Sefer*, Vol. 7 (Jerusalem, 1930), 41–3 (Hebrew).

¹⁰⁵ (Jerusalem, 1891).

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Ezra is mentioned by name several times in R. Isaiah's writings.

¹⁰⁷ *Keter 'Elyon* usually is called by R. Isaiah the Active Intellect of the angels, for instance see fol. 81b. See fol. 46b where this *Sefirah* is also termed *Nishmat Shaddai*—meaning the soul of the angels.

¹⁰⁸ Isaiah 61: 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Sod 'Etz ha-Da'at*, fol. 47a.

¹¹⁰ See *Sefer Gan 'Eden*, fol. 31b; *Sefer 'Otzar ha-Hokhmah*, fol. 82a.

the three worlds, upper, middle and lower, similar to the stand taken by R. Abraham ibn Ezra in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. Although, it does seem that his definition of the relationship between God (referred to as *Causa Causarum* or 'Illat ha-'Illot) and the world, as the relationship of the "divine portion"—or the soul—to the body, is reminiscent of the attitude of *Sefer ha-Kuzari*.¹¹¹ By interpreting the divine limbs of the *Shi'ur Qomah* as allusions to spiritual powers, R. Isaiah effectively neutralizes the significance of the numerical measures. In his *'Otzar ha-Hokhmah*, a philosophical interpretation of the *Greater Heikhalot*, R. Isaiah states:

"For from the throne and above [measures] one hundred and eighty thousands by tens of thousands [180,000,000] parasangs"—means that above the throne cannot be measured, for He does not possess a body and [therefore] cannot be measured, Heaven forbid! And when it says, "from His right forearm till His left forearm [the span] is one hundred and eighty by tens of thousands [180,000,000] parasangs"¹¹² it means that there is a great difference between the Attribute of Mercy, alluded to by the right forearm, and the Measure of Judgment, alluded to by the left forearm—not that He has a body or a right forearm or a left forearm, Heaven forbid!¹¹³

This viewpoint transforms the exact and monumental measurements that are given in the text and renders them as non-dimensional expressions.¹¹⁴ Ostensibly, we can here detect influences that originate in anti-anthropomorphic philosophical trends as found in the interpretation of the *Shi'ur Qomah* text already offered by Abulafia. Other influences stemming from the Ecstatic Kabbalah are noticeable in the works of R. Isaiah: the function of music in the process of attaining prophecy,¹¹⁵ his usage of erotic imagery in describing ecstatic experiences,¹¹⁶ and a

¹¹¹ R. Yehudah Halevi is mentioned several times in R. Isaiah's writings.

¹¹² The measurement given in the *Greater Heikhalot*, chapter 12, is different: "from the right forearm to the left forearm are seventy-seven tens of thousands parasangs." The number 180 does appear in this chapter in reference to the measurement of the height above the throne.

¹¹³ Fols. 81b–82a.

¹¹⁴ Gershom Scholem also held this opinion concerning the meaning of the *Sefer Shi'ur Qomah*, see his *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (New York, 1991), 24: "In reality though, all measurements fail, and the strident anthropomorphism is suddenly and paradoxically transformed into its opposite: the spiritual."

¹¹⁵ See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 58.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 213 note 51, 197.

spiritualistic understanding of messianic phenomenon.¹¹⁷ All of these issues are characteristic of topics found in Abulafian Kabbalah.

V. R. ELNATAN BEN MOSHE KALKISH AND HIS
SEFER 'EVEN SAPPİR

The book entitled *Sefer 'Even Sappir*, written by R. Elnatan ben Moshe Qalqish has come down to us in two different versions. One is a short version in which the Kabbalah plays only a tangential part,¹¹⁸ and the other is the longer and later version, composed in Constantinople during the years 1367–1368, extant only in a few manuscripts now found in the National Library in Paris (Hebrew Mss. 727–728).¹¹⁹ The latter is a voluminous work that contains many kabbalistic passages scattered throughout its hundreds of folios. The author lived in Constantinople,¹²⁰ but previously studied in Spain¹²¹ and probably also in Italy.¹²² We can assume that during the period he spent learning in Spain he also acquired his knowledge of the Theosophical Kabbalah and subsequently, either from writings that he acquired in Italy or Greece or maybe even from personal contacts during a sojourn in Greece, he also absorbed influences stemming from the Ecstatic-Prophetic Kabbalah of Abulafia and his students. *Sefer 'Even Sappir* is an extensive, and for the most part eclectic work, replete with discussions on Jewish law, philosophy, and Kabbalah. The author copied long tracts and even

¹¹⁷ See *Sefer ha-Kavod*, fol. 42b.

¹¹⁸ On the subject of the first version of the *Sefer 'Even Sappir* see E. Kupfer, "The Identification of Manuscripts in the Research Center for Hebrew Manuscripts in the Jewish National Library," *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, 1973), 137–8 (Hebrew). For a printed edition of the shorter version, written in 1323, see R. Cohen (Jerusalem, 1998).

¹¹⁹ The longer version of the *Sefer 'Even Sappir* was finished in the year 1368 in Constantinople. On this composition see D. Schwartz, *Charms, Properties and Intellectualism in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Ramat Gan, 2004), 142–74 (Hebrew); also I. Ta-Shma, *A Collection of Studies: Research on Medieval Rabbinic Literature, Volume 3: Italy and the Byzantine Empire* (Jerusalem, 2006), 12–3, 15–7 (Hebrew).

¹²⁰ Ms. Paris, National Library 728, fol. 39a. Like Abulafia, R. Elnatan used Greek and Latin words in his compositions, see for example Ms. Paris National Library 727, fols. 4a, 100b.

¹²¹ Ms. Paris, National Library 728, fol. 50a.

¹²² R. Elnatan copied from the Latin translation of his contemporary, R. Yehudah Romano, see Ms. Paris National Library 728, fol. 167b.

whole compositions, often without attributing his sources, sometimes preserving for us some hitherto unknown kabbalistic materials.¹²³

The greatest impact by far on R. Elnatan ben Moshe Qalqish's thought is to be found in the Kabbalah of R. Abraham Abulafia and his school. Although Abulafia's works are never quoted verbatim, nor is his name ever mentioned, *Sefer 'Even Sappir* is replete with discussions that clearly bear the imprint of the Prophetic Kabbalah, and in my opinion reveals the process by which this type of Kabbalah was internalized and continued to inspire other creative works. I will offer one example among many in order to illustrate this phenomenon:

God, may he be praised, gave us His holy Torah and taught us the path of letter-combination and the steps of the ladder, in the form of the letters, as He perceived that we are not intellectually capable of attaining knowledge of Him without this great and correct proposal. For... from the light and seraphic sphere of the intellect there shall be born as the image of the prophetic vision, and this is the ultimate purpose of the letter-combination. And according to its refinement and the power of its innerness, these [methods] are worthy of being called premises... for they are as levels by which to ascend on high, because it is balance of the scales, depending on the light of the intellect and not on sensible light.¹²⁴

The method of letter combination was held in high esteem by R. Elnatan, for it is viewed by him as the way to revelation, even the way for one to attain the level of prophecy. This clearly points to the influence of Abulafia's technique, as well as an appreciation of its ultimate mystical goals. Even R. Elnatan's reference to "the ladder" demonstrates his use of Abulafian terminology. It is noteworthy to mention the possible connection between *Sefer 'Even Sappir*, in its longer version, to one of the compositions of the aforementioned R. Isaiah ben Joseph ha-Levi the Greek.¹²⁵

¹²³ For an example see M. Idel, "Mundus Imaginalis and Liqqutei HaRan," in *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 74.

¹²⁴ Ms. Paris National Library 727, fol. 10a. On the relationship between letter combinations and the Torah see the passage from Abulafia's *Sefer 'Imrei Shefer*, discussed above note 36 and Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 114.

¹²⁵ Compare the passage in *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, fols. 9a-b to Ms. Paris National Library 727, fol. 174a. It seems that here R. 'Elnatan copied from R. Isaiah ha-Levi.

VI. *SEFER HA-PELIY'AH* AND *SEFER HA-QANAH*

In recent studies, scholars have argued for the Byzantine provenance of two very important and influential kabbalistic works, the books entitled *ha-Peliy'ah* and *ha-Qanah*. Aharon Jelinek was the first to advance, although very briefly,¹²⁶ a reasoned argument concerning the origins of these two works, namely that they were not composed in Spain as was supposed, but rather in the Byzantine Empire.¹²⁷ *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* is a wide-ranging commentary on the first few chapters of the book of Genesis, whereas *Sefer ha-Qanah* is an extensive exposition on the subject of the "Rationales for the Commandments" according to the Kabbalah. We can assume that both of these books were composed in the beginning of the fifteenth century by the same, still anonymous author, who lived in an area suffused with Byzantine culture. This Kabbalist followed the eclectic style of the Byzantine Kabbalist R. 'Elnatan ben Moshe, collecting copious amounts of kabbalistic materials, slightly paraphrasing them and then incorporating them into his own works. The sheer abundance of kabbalistic materials that the author copied and their having originated from diverse schools of kabbalistic thought testifies as a hundred witnesses for the wide dissemination of this lore during this period in the Byzantine Empire. From the sixteenth century onward, these two works were considered classics of the Kabbalah. This acceptance was apparently due to their pseudo-epigraphic framework, having been set as a dialogue between different members of the family of R. Nehuniah ben ha-Qanah, and also due to the disclosure of revelations of Elijah that appear in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*.

¹²⁶ Jelinek, *Kuntres Taryag*, 129.

¹²⁷ See Kushnir-Oron, *Ha-Peli'ah and Ha-Kanah—Their Kabbalistic Principles*, 1–14; I. Ta-Shma, "Where Were the Books *Ha-Kanah* and *Ha-Peli'ah* Written?" in *Chapters in Jewish Social History... Dedicated to Prof. Jacob Katz* (Jerusalem, 1990), 56–63 (Hebrew). See also M. Oron, "Who composed the *Sefer Ha-Kanah* and the *Sefer Ha-Peli'ah*?" *Tarbiz* 54/2 (1995): 297–8 (Hebrew), where she rejects the suggestion of S. Bauman, "Who composed the *Sefer ha-Qanah* and the *Sefer Ha-Peliy'ah*?" *Tarbiz* 54/1 (1995): 150–2 (Hebrew), who argued that the author was R. Shem Tov, and see above, note 93. The view that these works reflected the social realities of Spain was championed by Y. Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* Vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1978), 369–73; and B. Netanyahu, "Towards an Evaluation of the Date of Composition of the Books *Ha-Kanah* and *Ha-Peliy'ah*," in *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume*, ed., S. Lieberman (Jerusalem, 1975), Volume III, 247–68 (Hebrew). On the acquaintance with *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* by a sixteenth-century Byzantine homilist see Schwartz, "On the Characteristics," 95.

Another kabbalistic trend, utterly distinctive from the Prophetic Kabbalah, gained prominence in the Byzantine Kabbalah. This is the Theosophical Kabbalah from the school of R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, also known as R. Joseph *ha-'Arokh* (The Tall). Traces of this type of kabbalistic thought were not yet apparent in the writings of R. Isaiah ben Joseph ha-Levi the Greek, nor in *Sefer 'Even Sappir*, but its impact upon the books *ha-Qanah* and *ha-Peliy'ah* are a commonplace in scholarship.¹²⁸ I would like to briefly describe the material belonging to this school of kabbalistic thought, material which will prove relevant to our understanding of the Byzantine Kabbalah. *Commentary on the Sefer Yetzirah*, spuriously attributed to RABAD, (the acronym of twelfth-century R. Abraham ben David of Posquieres), has been a classic of Kabbalah since its appearance in the late thirteenth century and up until the Kabbalah of R. Isaac Luria Ashkenazi and his followers. To be sure, we are not only speaking of one composition, important though it may be, but rather with a multifarious and varied *oeuvre* penned by the aforementioned R. Joseph, R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, and their students and their students' subsequent followers.¹²⁹ Clearly, not all of these works reached the Byzantine Empire, some were composed outside of its borders, possibly in Spain, and there is a tendency of late to see North Africa as their point of origin¹³⁰—but this remains as yet unclear. It seems that it was in the Byzantine Empire that the author of *Peliy'ah* and *Qanah* obtained a type of manuscript, one that we still possess some copies of today, which bound together *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* and afterwards *Sefer ha-Temunah*. The latter is found in several Byzantine manuscripts together with the aforementioned *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* of R. Joseph's, and we discussed above its close ties to the system of kabbalistic thought belonging to the school of R. Joseph Ashkenazi. These two works together are among the main contributing sources of the vast collage that constitutes *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Kushnir-Oron, *ibid.*, 82, 187–93.

¹²⁹ On the plausibility of the premise that a school of thought connected to R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid ever existed see M. Idel, "Kabbalistic Materials from the School of R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, Vol. 2, (1983), 169–207 (Hebrew). On the possible connection between this school and the *Sefer ha-Temunah* see *ibid.*, 203–5, and especially note 207.

¹³⁰ See Hallamish, *Kabbalistic Commentary of R. Yoseph Ben Shalom Ashkenazi on Genesis Rabbah*, 12.

¹³¹ See for instance, Ms. Cambridge, Or. 2116, 8/1; Ms. Oxford-Bodlian 1953.

These two works share a unique formulation of the theory of the cosmic cycles, more extreme than the one promulgated by Nahmanides and his circle, and one that did not manage to have a significant impact in Spain. Emphasizing the centrality of the cosmic cycles in such an open manner is characteristic of the school of R. Joseph, *Sefer ha-Temunah*, the texts copied by R. Shem Tov ibn Foliyya who was active in Byzantium at the beginning of the fifteenth century, in the books of *ha-Qanah* and *ha-Peliy'ah*, and later on, in an even more extreme manner, in *Sefer Shushan Sodot*. I cannot dwell here on the details of this unique theory of the cosmic cycles which became a cornerstone of Byzantine Kabbalah. Suffice it to say that this theory, which holds that the world is now in the cycle of the sefirah of *din* or stern Justice, which has its roots in Spanish Kabbalah but was ultimately rejected by it, found its deepest expression in the school of *Sefer ha-Temunah*.¹³² Its sixteenth-century revival among Spanish Jewry after the Expulsion is a subject in and of itself, one which demonstrates how a sheltered Spanish Kabbalah reacted when confronted with other and diverse Kabbalistic worldviews absorbed during the émigrés' sojourns in areas once considered to be Greek. We are referring to Spanish Kabbalists like R. Meir ibn Gabbai in the Land of Israel, R. David ben Avi Zimrah in Egypt, and in North Africa R. Abraham Adrutiel. I have pointed out another similarity between R. Shem Tov ibn Foliyya and the author of *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* in another place.¹³²

VII. R. MOSHE OF KIEV AND HIS *SEFER SHUSHAN SODOT*

In order to underscore the unique character of the Byzantine Kabbalah and demonstrate just how distinct it was from the Kabbalah that developed in Spain, I would like to point out the absence of direct influences of all strata of the Zoharic corpus—which formed the backbone of Spanish Kabbalah during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—on the Kabbalah that flourished in the Byzantine Empire up until the Spanish Expulsion. This is clearly the case in the works of R. Isaiah ben Joseph ha-Levi the Greek, in *Sefer 'Even Sappir* of R. Elnatan ben Moshe Qalqish, and even in the case of the books *Qanah* and *Peliy'ah*, where passages quoted from the Zohar have been culled secondhand

¹³² See M. Idel, "On the History of the Injunction Against Learning Kabbalah Before the Age of Forty," *AJS Review* 5 (1980): 11–12 (Hebrew).

from the works of R. Menahem Recanati, as already shown by Michal Kushnir-Oron.¹³³ During the course of the controversy on the theory of transmigration of souls (*gilgul*) in Candia, E. Gottlieb has already noted that the *Zohar's* influence was only peripheral. He attributed the fact of the Kabbalists turning a blind eye to the *Zohar's* rather positive stance on the matter of *gilgul* as due to the paucity of Zoharic texts found in Candia during the second third of the fifteenth century.¹³⁴ E. Gottlieb's conclusion can be further confirmed by other material dealing with the controversy that I have subsequently identified from manuscripts.¹³⁵

We have in our possession two Kabbalistic works composed at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries written by R. Moshe of Kiev. In my opinion, this Kabbalist drew his sources from kabbalistic material extant by his time in the former Byzantine Empire.¹³⁶ In his *Sefer Shushan Sodot*, R. Moshe of Kiev provides us with a singular development of the theory of the cosmic cycles, as well as preserving, in this anthology of kabbalistic literature, remnants of, in my opinion, a Byzantine composition that distinguishes itself by addressing the object of religious devotion as "Lord of the Cosmic Cycles."¹³⁷ This lost work—which elsewhere I intend to describe its extant remnants—clearly demonstrates a more extreme position on the issue of cosmic cycles than does either *Sefer ha-Temunah* or *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, and deserves an elaborated analysis, which remains a desideratum for scholarly research. Important testimony attesting to the fund of kabbalistic subjects to be found in the provinces of the former Byzantine Empire are reflected in just a few lines of *Sefer Shushan Sodot*. R. Moshe of Kiev states that he has recently found kabbalistic traditions which he quotes in their author's names, and his formulation of these traditions, as they appear in this passage, remains unparalleled in all of kabbalistic literature:

¹³³ *Ha-Peli'ah and Ha-Kanah—Their Kabbalistic Principles*, 80.

¹³⁴ *Studies in the Kabbala Literature*, 373–4.

¹³⁵ See Ms. Paris National Library 800, to which I will return later in this study.

¹³⁶ See H. Lieberman, "Printing in Korets," *Sinai* 68 (1971): 182–9, (Hebrew).

¹³⁷ See for instance, *Sefer Shushan Sodot* (Korets, 1784), folios 13b, 14a. [Or ha-Ganuz edition, 1995, pp. 26–7].

[A] We have already explained this secret according to our own view, but since then I found a passage from our ancient sages¹³⁸ on the same subject, and my heart was filled with the desire [to write it down] because it clarifies what I already wrote. These are the words that were related therein. [B] The learned and enlightened scholar, the honorable Rabbi Nathan said to me these words: Know that the fullness of the secret of prophecy [is fulfilled] when the prophet will suddenly see his own form standing before him, and he will forget and ignore himself while he sees his own form [standing] before him speaking with him and telling him the future. Pertaining to this secret our Sages of blessed memory said: "Great is the power of those prophets who can liken the [created] form to its Creator."¹³⁹ The learned scholar Ibn Ezra said, "the one who hears is a man and the one who speaks is a man"¹⁴⁰ [the text] ends here. [C] Another scholar wrote as a variation on this theme and these are his words: "And I, through the power of letter combination and mental concentration, experienced what happened to me with the light that I saw going with me, as I have mentioned in my book *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, although I did not merit to see my own form standing in front of me, for this I could not achieve." These are his words. [D] Another learned scholar wrote [to this effect] as a variation on this theme and these are his words: "And I, just but a youth, know and recognize with definitive knowledge that 'I am no prophet neither am I the son of a prophet,'¹⁴¹ nor does the Holy Spirit [*Ruah ha-Qodesh*] reside in me, nor can I make use of a Heavenly Voice [*Bat Qol*], for I have not merited this, 'I have not put off my coat... I have not washed my feet.'¹⁴² Nevertheless, I call on the Heavens and the Earth to be my witnesses, as well as those who dwell in the Heavens above—they too can testify, that one day I was sitting and writing a secret [matter explained] by the 'way of truth' [a kabbalistic secret] and suddenly I saw my own form standing in front of me, and my own self disappeared from me, and I was forced and compelled to cease writing."¹⁴³

It has already been pointed out by G. Scholem and E. Gottlieb that section [C] deals with the author of the book *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, a work stemming from the school of Ecstatic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia,

¹³⁸ It appears that R. Moshe was indeed reading from an old manuscript. See Lieberman, 182–3, note 10.

¹³⁹ Genesis Rabba, 24:1; 27:1.

¹⁴⁰ Abraham Ibn Ezra, "For the one who speaks is a man and the one who hears is a man," *Yesod Mora* (Frankfurt, 1840), 50; also see Ibn Ezra's *Commentary on Daniel*, 10: 21.

¹⁴¹ Amos 7: 14.

¹⁴² Paraphrasing the Song of Songs 5: 3.

¹⁴³ *Sefer Shushan Sodot* (Korets, 1784), fol. 69b. [Or Haganuz edition, 1995, 171–2].

and section [D] with R. Isaac of Acre.¹⁴⁴ Section [B] refers to a R. Nathan who is reported to have given over a tradition (“he said to me”) to an unknown student, and in my opinion it also refers to the author of *Sha’arei Tzedeq*, R. Nathan ben Sa’adyah Har’ar.¹⁴⁵ While it is true that section [C] begins with the words “another scholar wrote” which could be explained as now referring to a different personality, we could also translate the same words from the Hebrew as “the same scholar wrote afterwards.” It is reasonable to assume that sections [B] and [C] found in this manuscript read by R. Moshe of Kiev were collected by R. Isaac of Acre, who was the person responsible for preserving other kabbalistic passages penned by this same R. Nathan.¹⁴⁶ We should mention here that *Sefer Shushan Sodot* contains other passages that were in my opinion penned by R. Isaac of Acre, but since they are anonymously copied by R. Moshe of Kiev, scholars have missed identifying their true author.¹⁴⁷ I would like to stress that the material brought in this passage is not extant in any other source, which demonstrates the thesis that we can find important discussions on the study of Jewish mysticism in the Byzantine Kabbalah, texts that otherwise did not survive in any other of the centers of kabbalistic activity.

Clearly, at least one Kabbalist who was familiar with kabbalistic materials stemming from the circle of R. Abraham Abulafia, R. Elnatan ben Moshe Qalqish, also studied in Spain and quotes from the school of Castilian Kabbalah as well—most notably from the Kabbalists R. Moshe De Leon and R. Joseph Gikatilla. On the other hand, R. Shem Tov ibn Foliyya traveled from Spain through Byzantium on his way to the Land of Israel and probably brought with him Spanish kabbalistic texts—perhaps from Segovia. It seems that R. Joseph Ashkenazi’s Kabbalah was also brought to Byzantium from Spain, but we cannot know for certain. Of course, we must remember that the Byzantine Kabbalah

¹⁴⁴ G. Scholem, “Eine Kabbalistische Erklahrung der Prophetie als Selbstbegegnung,” *MGWJ* 74 (1930): 285–90; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 253–4; Gottlieb, *Studies in the Kabbalah Literature*, 247; Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, 86–95.

¹⁴⁵ For further information, see my book, *Natan ben Sa’adyah Harar, Le Porte della Giustizia, Sha’arei Sedeq*, and my article, “R. Nathan ben Sa’adyah Har’ar, the Author of *Sha’arei Tzedeq* and his Impact in the Land of Israel,” *Shalem* 7 (2002): 47–58 (Hebrew).

¹⁴⁶ See Idel, “*Mundus Imaginalis* and *Likkutei HaRan*,” in *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 73–89.

¹⁴⁷ See for instance, *Sefer Shushan Sodot*, folios 70a–b, 71a–b.

absorbed in a significant manner the Kabbalah that developed in different parts of Italy, especially that of R. Menahem Recanati, who we have mentioned above, as well as appropriating from the Kabbalah of R. Reuven Tzarfati.¹⁴⁸

VIII. REVELATORY KABBALAH IN THE BYZANTINE/ OTTOMAN EMPIRES

A feature common to both of the main schools of kabbalistic thought which are discussed in this paper, namely, the Prophetic-Ecstatic Kabbalah and the Kabbalah of *Sefer ha-Temunah* and its branches, is that the majority of their works display an acute sense of messianic tension. Abulafia thought himself to be the Messiah, and actively communicated this message, in writing as well as orally, mainly in the vicinity of Italy. Nevertheless, Abulafia's messianic writings were relatively few in comparison to his overall literary output and did not have significant impact beyond a small circle of Kabbalists who closely studied his eschatological writings. In a completely different manner, certain messianic elements recur in *Sefer ha-Temunah* and its related literature.¹⁴⁹ Acute messianic tension is also exhibited in the kabbalistic literature connected to *Sefer ha-Meshiv* which, although it was composed in Spain, its branches continued to flourish in the Ottoman Empire after the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁵⁰ While according to Abulafia, who actually did consider himself to be the Messiah, the messianic experience is for the most part internal, in other words intellectual, *Sefer ha-Meshiv* literature does not identify any member of its circle, nor any other historical personality, as the Messiah. Rather, in this circle the Messiah was viewed as a power that was born of the intercourse of the *Sefirot* of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut* in a manner

¹⁴⁸ R. Shabatai Potto, the copyist of Ms. Paris National Library. 786, which contains the *Commentary on the Torah* of R. Menahem Recanati, from the beginning of the fifteenth century, quotes R. Reuven Tzarfati anonymously. See, for instance, fol. 116b, where he copied a passage from Abulafia that was copied by Tzarfati in his commentary on *Sefer Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohut*, MS Cambridge, Trinity College 108, fol. 123b.

¹⁴⁹ See the calculation of the end of days in the commentary printed alongside the *Sefer ha-Temunah*, folios 58b–59a. Eschatological calculations also appear in the *Sefer ha-Peliyah*, this due to the influence of R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi's works on its anonymous author.

¹⁵⁰ See M. Idel, "Neglected Writings by the Author of 'Sefer Kaf ha-Qetoret'," *Pe'amim* 53 (1992): 75–89 (Hebrew).

reminiscent of the birth of Jesus, the last *Sefirah* being described as a virgin who receives the influx of the Holy Spirit. In order to hasten the advent of the Messiah, whose time had already arrived—according to revelations experienced by this school of visionary Kabbalists—the powers of evil, they who would prevent his coming, must be neutralized. To this end magical practices were implemented to draw down Samael and Amon of No, the two chiefs of the realm of evil, to bind them or to otherwise neutralize their power. We are speaking of a vast literature, known within small circles of Kabbalists between the years 1470–1530. It is very likely that R. Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi and R. Shlomo Molkho, who each spent some time in the Ottoman Empire, had been influenced by the contents of this literature. In spite of the fact that the revelations we have just referred to were received by Kabbalists who were active in Spain, Italy, and Sicily in different periods, at least some of these compositions were known in both centers of kabbalistic study that R. Joseph Karo was active in: the area of today's Greece and Safed, then both considered part of the Ottoman Empire. The prophetic works of Abulafia were known in the Byzantine Empire—the first of them was composed in Patros—and it is very likely that the last of the Kabbalists belonging to the circle of *Sefer ha-Meshiv* reached the Ottoman Empire and there composed their works. This demonstrates that of all the centers of Jewish learning that existed, it was in the area now considered Greece that kabbalistic works of a revelatory-visionary nature were more prevalent than anywhere else in the world. Works of a pseudo-epigraphic nature were composed in the Byzantine Empire during the period approximately between 1350 and the beginning of the fifteenth century, for example *Sefer ha-Temunah*, *Sefer ha-Peliyah*, and *Sefer ha-Qanah*. The two latter works were penned by the same author, who repeatedly claims having experienced heavenly revelations, as we have already mentioned. It is striking that in all three of these works great interest is taken in particular formulations of kabbalistic theories that although they may have originated in Spain, were not prominent in Spanish kabbalistic thought. My point concerns certain perceptions on *gilgul* as well as the cosmic cycles, and I will discuss these two subjects at length later on. That these issues were incorporated into these three aforementioned works contributed to their acceptance within the general economy of kabbalistic thought, so much so that even Spanish Kabbalists with conservative leanings like R. Me'ir ibn Gabbai, the anonymous author of the book *Galliya*

Raza', R. David ben Avi Zimrah, and to a certain extent even R. Joseph Karo in his book entitled *Maggid Mesharim*, all accepted these theories in one way or another. *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* is replete with Abulafian material, including a copy of an almost complete version of his book entitled *Sefer Gan Na'ul*.

Logically, we can assume that any Kabbalist who lived in this area during the twenties and the thirties of the sixteenth century could read and adopt most of the kabbalistic revelatory-visionary literature mentioned above. In any event, R. Shlomo Alqabetz was acquainted with Abulafia's Kabbalah and quotes his *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, while his contemporary, R. Joseph Karo, was aware of the ideas originating in the circle of *Sefer ha-Meshiv*.¹⁵¹ In the same area that Alqabetz and R. Joseph Karo lived, sometime close to the middle of the sixteenth century, another work was being written by an anonymous Kabbalist, *Sefer Galia' Raza'*, which also exhibits traces of the visionary elements present in *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, combines Hebrew with Aramaic, and essentially continues a pre-expulsion Spanish kabbalistic tradition.¹⁵²

There can be no doubt that an analysis of Karo's *Maggid Meisharim*, a diary based on Karo's visions first experienced while an inhabitant of the Ottoman Empire, will disclose that his revelations are closer in kind to those of *Sefer ha-Meshiv* than to those of Abulafia. This is recognizable, first and foremost, in his use of language and recurring imagery, as well as his basic kabbalistic perceptions. For example, *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, as far as it could, closely followed the Zoharic literary style and adopted its characteristic mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. This admixture of languages is non-existent in Abulafia's writings but does play an important role in *Sefer Maggid Meisharim*. In addition, the magical tendencies, so characteristic of *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, primarily its information concerning techniques used to inspire visions, reverberate in Karo's work. Nevertheless, Karo's choice of techniques for attaining revelations of the Mishnah are unlike those advanced by either of the schools of revelatory Kabbalah, at least in one respect.

¹⁵¹ See Idel, "Inquiries into the Doctrine of *Sefer ha-Meshiv*: A Chapter in the History of Spanish Kabbalah," *Sefunot* 17 (1983): 219–26 (Hebrew). Elsewhere I intend to devote a deserved study to an otherwise neglected topic—the impact of the Byzantine Kabbalah on the thought of R. Joseph Karo.

¹⁵² See the introduction of R. Elior to her edition of the unpublished section of the *Sefer Galia Raza'* (Jerusalem, 1981): 1–16 (Hebrew).

While Abulafia and *Sefer ha-Meshiv* both utilize the Holy Names to achieve their visions, what I have called anomian techniques, Karo in contradistinction mostly uses nomian techniques—techniques that are appropriate within the framework of Jewish law or *Halakhah*—in his case the repetitious recitation of chapters of the Mishnah. This constitutes a fundamental distinction, and we can assume that it reflects important socio-cultural differences between these Kabbalists. Abulafia belonged to the strata of society that could be deemed the secondary-elite, someone who was a cultured Jew but who did not occupy any formal position within the Jewish community. He was not an important legalist, nor a communal leader, nor was he a functionary within a royal court, namely a court Jew. This also seems to be the case concerning the anonymous authors of the circle of *Sefer ha-Meshiv*. In contrast, there can be no doubt that such a personage as R. Joseph Karo belonged to the first-elite of Jewish society. During his lifetime Karo enjoyed the status of a major religious figure in Safed, as well as throughout the Diaspora, and even posthumously he retains special status in the annals of Jewish law, his authoritative rulings having sustained generations of observant Jews. Karo's adherence to the recitation of the Mishnah as a mystical technique, in my opinion, reflects the fact that he functioned within a wide consensus of Jewish society. Beyond this fundamental distinction we must stress the element common to these diverse techniques: they are all special types of inducements for attaining divine revelations. They are all short triggers, designed to work quickly and have an almost perfect success rate—if the conditions needed to perform the technique have been perfectly met. From this vantage point, the recitation of the Mishnah, albeit a nomian technique, is to be distinguished from the daily practice of Jewish law, because one's performance of the Jewish ritual are not meant to achieve an immediate result. As such, we can include Karo within the category of revelatory-visionary kabbalistic authors, since he used techniques meant to induce these experiences and they were of the quick and "easy" type.

IX. KABBALAH ON THE ISLAND OF CRETE

An important center of kabbalistic study was Candia, a city located on the island of Crete. In one of his epistles, R. Abraham Abulafia states that he sent compositions (*quntresim*) on the subject of Prophetic

Kabbalah to the island of Crete.¹⁵³ R. Shemaryah ben Elijah Ikriti [of Crete] was acquainted with kabbalistic ideas, even though his thought is not considered to be kabbalistic.¹⁵⁴ R. Elnatan, whom we have previously discussed, lived for a time on this island prior to writing his book *'Even Sappir*, as stated in Ms. Paris National Library 727, fol. 26b. Indirect yet important evidence about the Kabbalah circulating in Candia can be garnered from Elijah ben Eliezer from Candia's *Commentary on the Sefer ha-Bahir*, a philosopher who composed his commentary in the second half of the fourteenth century. As we shall see later on, R. Elijah opposed the Kabbalah and interpreted *Sefer ha-Bahir* in a way as to completely remove its characteristic theosophical conceptions.¹⁵⁵ At the end of the fourteenth century, the oldest extant manuscript of the *Zohar* was copied in Candia,¹⁵⁶ and in the year 1407 a composition written by R. Joseph Gikatilla was copied there as well.¹⁵⁷ In the year 1418, R. Nehemiah ben Menahem Qalomiti completed his book *Milhemet ha-'Emmet* (Battle for Truth),¹⁵⁸ in which he clearly shows his acquaintance with the *Zohar* as well as *Sefer ha-Nefesh ha-Hakhamah* of R. Moshe De Leon.

X. THE CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE KABBALAH IN BYZANTIUM

A topic in and of itself concerns the anti-kabbalistic polemic that transpired in the Byzantine Empire. There are three exceptional documents pertaining to this controversy that are still extant. One is

¹⁵³ Ms. Sasson 56, fol. 33b.

¹⁵⁴ For more details on the man as well as his thought see C. Sirat, "Epistle on the Creation of the World by Shemaryah Elijah Ikriti," *Eshel Be'er Sheva* 2 (1981): 199–227 (Hebrew).

¹⁵⁵ See Ms. Vatican 431, folios 1a–26b. About R. Elijah and his writings see S. Rosenberg, "The Book of Logic' by Elijah ben Eliezer Hayerushalmi," *Da'at* 1 (1978): 63–4 (Hebrew); Kupfer, "Identifying Manuscripts," 134–5.

¹⁵⁶ G. Scholem, "A New Section from the Midrash ha-Ne'elam of the Zohar," *Jubilee Volume in Honor of Louis Ginzberg* (New York, 1946), 426 (Hebrew).

¹⁵⁷ Ms. Vatican-Barbarina Or. 82, fol. 143b. The copyist was R. Moshe bar Isaac ibn Tibbon, who copied *Sefer Ginat Egoz* by Gikatilla. See I. Ta-Shma, "On Greek-Byzantine Rabbinic Literature of the Fourteenth Century," *Tarbiz* 62 (1993): 109–10 (Hebrew).

¹⁵⁸ See the printed edition, edited by P. Doron (New York, 1975). 'Adoniyah Qalomiti had previously, in the year 1329, copied one of R. Abraham Abulafia's commentaries on Maimonides's *Guide* while in the city of Saloniki, and it would seem that he is a relative of the author of *Milhemet ha-'Emmet*.

Commentary on the Sefer ha-Bahir by Elijah ben Eliezer from Candia, partially preserved in Ms. Vatican 431, which attempts to portray *Bahir* as a philosophical rather than kabbalistic work. In his commentary R. Elijah distinguishes between two types of perceptions concerning the *Sefirot*: the right one, the one that is compatible with “rational thought”—the *Sefirot* seen as mediating entities suspended between God and the world—and the wrong one, the one that views the *Sefirot* as actually being Divine *Middot* (measures or attributes), in kabbalistic parlance—the essence of God. In illustrating the latter perception of the *Sefirot* he writes:

There are those that say that they [the *Sefirot*] are the Attributes of God. They are following the path of the Ishmaelites who profess that God has attributes, only the Ishmaelites are satisfied with three—Wisdom, Power and Will, while they [profess] more than this! So they say—as God is wise with Wisdom so He is powerful by the Dynamis, thus He is kind through Loving Kindness, merciful through Mercy, eternal through Eternity, terrible through Majesty and righteous through Justice. But then there are those that say that the *Sefirot* ARE God, may He be blessed, Heaven Forbid! They have followed in the path of the Christians, and it is incumbent to vilify them and to blot out their memory.¹⁵⁹

I have quoted this passage in order to point out that this criticism of the perception of the *Sefirot* as the essence of God, accompanied with its comparison to Christian theology, is strikingly reminiscent of the criticism by R. Abraham Abulafia in his *Epistle* sent to Barcelona¹⁶⁰ leveled at the students of Nahmanides. Both R. Elijah and Abulafia compare these “essentialist” Kabbalists, those who held the view that the *Sefirot* constituted the essence of God, to Christians.

The second instance, though no less important, pertaining to the anti-kabbalistic polemic comprises the attack of R. Moshe ha-Cohen Ashkenazi on the kabbalistic doctrine of *gilgul*, transmigration of souls or metempsychosis, better known as the “Debate in Candia,” which was described by E. Gottlieb. The documents pertaining to this debate show the fierce opposition to the Kabbalah and are the most extensive of its kind that we possess, up until R. Yehudah Aryeh of Modena wrote his anti-kabbalistic polemic entitled *Sefer 'Ari Nohem*

¹⁵⁹ Ms. Vatican 431, fol. 5b. On the whole issue see now the view of B. Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth: Reincarnation in Early Modern Italian Kabbalah* (Leiden, 2009), 41–70, especially p. 44.

¹⁶⁰ Published by A. Jellinek in his *Ginzei Hokhmat ha-Kabbalah* (Leipzig, 1853), 19.

in the seventeenth century. Traces of this debate probably influenced the detailed criticism leveled against the Kabbalah found in the book entitled *Behinat ha-Dat* written by R. Elijah Delmedigo, which was also composed in Candia. This leads us to the conclusion that there were constant outbursts of opposition to the Kabbalah in Candia and that this phenomenon predated the criticism that was later to be leveled against this lore in Italy.

It is difficult to ascertain to what extent the special character of Byzantine Kabbalah, especially its preoccupation with the idea of metempsychosis, central to it since the fourteenth century, is what instigated the critique in Candia. Even if we allow for the rise of the Christian Kabbalah as the incentive for the anti-Kabbalistic polemic of R. Elijah Delmedigo—and while this cannot be overstated—there is no reason to ignore the local background of the argument, made plain in the debate concerning metempsychosis, the other side defended by the well respected local Rabbi and Kabbalist R. Michael Balbo.

The third document is entitled *Epistle on the Gilgul*. In Scholem's printed lectures on Abulafia, he mentions a certain epistle concerning the doctrine of metempsychosis composed by Abulafia.¹⁶¹ In a letter dated the eighth of Av, 5732 (August, 1972) Scholem informed me that "the manuscript in Paris concerning *gilgul*, which in my opinion was composed by Abulafia, is listed by Zotenberg as no. 800, folios 44–46." The composition found in this manuscript is anonymous and mainly discusses religious issues as seen from a philosophical perspective, one that tends toward the doctrines of Averroes. An examination of its content reveals no relationship between it and Abulafia's theories. All the usual signifiers of Abulafian teachings are absent from this document: letter combinations, prophetic or messianic topics, the use of foreign words, and so on. The *Epistle* was composed as a response to queries concerning metempsychosis and, in my opinion, constitutes the first stage of the debate in Candia held in the fifteenth century between R. Michael ben Sabbatai ha-Cohen Balbo and R. Moshe ha-Cohen Ashkenazi.¹⁶² The *Epistle* under discussion is,

¹⁶¹ *The Kabbalah of Sefer ha-Temunah and of Abraham Abulafia*, ed., J. ben Shlomo (Jerusalem, 1968), 125 (Hebrew).

¹⁶² E. Gottlieb dedicated a detailed article to this interesting debate, but did not mention this Parisian manuscript, National Library 800. See Gottlieb, *Studies in the Kabbala Literature*, 370–96 (Hebrew); A. Ravitsky, 'Al Da'at ha-Makom, (Jerusalem, 1991), 182–211 (Hebrew); Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth*; G. Scholem, *Devils, Demons and Souls: Essays on Demonology*, ed. E. Liebes (Jerusalem, 2004), 210–3 (Hebrew).

in my opinion, the response that R. Michael composed and sent in answer to R. Moshe's questions. Subsequently, I have found a parallel passage from the *Epistle* in another manuscript, Vatican 254, which contains some of the material pertinent to the debate in Candia. To compare the texts, I present both versions:

Ms. Paris National Library 800, fol. 45a

First I must inform you that the Kabbalah is divided into three types: The first is the Kabbalah whose proofs are from Holy Scriptures. The [verses] bear testimony to it and are its evidence, and it needs no other belief for its demonstration other than the many verses [of Scripture] that attest to it. Yet, these verses themselves are [various], some are easy to understand and some are hints—some of these hints being pertinent and some remote. The second [type of] Kabbalah does not derive its proofs from Scripture but rather from the words of the Talmudic Sages... And the third [type of] Kabbalah [stands] alone and its demonstration is rational, as the sun is approximately 170 times greater than the earth.

Ms. Vatican 254, fol. 12b: [Vatican 105, fol. 201b,]

It is incumbent upon us to note that the Kabbalah has been divided into three types: The first kind is the Kabbalah whose proofs are known from the Holy Writ. The [verses] bear testimony to it and are its evidence, and it needs no other validation for its demonstration other than the many verses [of Scripture] that attest to it. Indeed, among these verses there are those that are easy to understand and those that are hints, some close [in meaning] and others remote. The second kind of Kabbalah does not derive its proofs from Scripture at all but rather from the words of the Talmudic Sages alone. And the third kind of Kabbalah [stands] alone and its demonstration is rational.

XI. THE ARRIVAL OF THE SPANISH KABBALISTS AFTER THE EXPULSION

After the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, Kabbalists arrived to the former Byzantine Empire from the Iberian Peninsula—and with them their kabbalistic books. There they encountered the kabbalistic developments that we have described in this study and were duly influenced by them. Thus we find the first references to Byzantine kabbalistic

literature in the writings of Spanish Kabbalists. For example, an anonymous author of the *Sefer ha-Meshiv* circle, writing at the beginning of the sixteenth century, refers to *Sefer ha-Qanah*. Once he mentions “the words of *Sefer ha-Qanah* and his school” alongside a reference to “R. Simeon bar Yohai and his school,” viewing the former as an explanation of the latter—“these are words of clarity, living waters that when seen by the dead they are revived through these words.”¹⁶³ Elsewhere in this composition there is another reference to the *Qanah* also in the context of the Zoharic literature.¹⁶⁴ It is not clear to which book the author is actually referring, *Qanah* or *Peliy’ah*, or maybe both, since the author used the expression “*Sefer ha-Qanah* and his school,” implying both. I have not found that the books *Qanah* and *Peliy’ah* made a huge impact, and this issue deserves a separate study. In any event, the image of a book or even books attributed to “the *Qanah* son of the *Qanah*” needs clarification. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first mention in the entire kabbalistic literature of these books as seminal works, to be discussed alongside the *Zohar*. This attitude can point to the geographic proximity of the author of *Sefer Kaf ha-Qetoret*, presumably the European part of the Ottoman Empire, and the area where the books *Qanah* and *Peliy’ah* were composed, some hundred years earlier. On the other hand, presenting *Zohar* and *Peliy’ah* as the two basic books of the Kabbalah brings to mind a similar situation that arose in this same vicinity about one hundred and fifty years later, when Sabbatai Tzvi testified that he had studied only two books—*Zohar* and *Qanah*.¹⁶⁵ The similar evaluation of the authoritative status of these two bodies of kabbalistic literature, shown by the anonymous Kabbalist of the sixteenth century and by Sabbatai Tzvi is surprising, but also in my opinion significant, since they were both active, it would seem, in the same geographical area. Obviously, I am not suggesting that the same passages that I have presented above from the Schocken manuscript referring to *Sefer ha-Qanah* directly influenced Sabbatai Tzvi; certainly there can only be a very slight chance of this having occurred. But perhaps the attitude expressed was one that gained momentum in the Ottoman areas and subsequently did impact the kabbalistic thought of the seventeenth-century Messiah.

¹⁶³ Ms. Jerusalem, Schocken, Kabbalah 10, fol. 32b.

¹⁶⁴ Ms. Schocken, fol. 56a.

¹⁶⁵ See G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, 115–7, the testimony of R. Moses Pinheiro.

XII. CONCERNING SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BYZANTINE KABBALAH

In light of the bibliographical and textual evidence presented above, it seems conclusive that a long line of compositions that were considered by the last generation of scholars to be of Spanish provenance, actually were composed in the Byzantine Empire. Thus the balance between the contributions of these two locales concerning the production of kabbalistic literature, both in terms of quality and quantity, has been significantly altered. If we compare the creative output of kabbalistic literature in Byzantium during the years 1330–1492 to that of Spain, we can formulate some important conclusions concerning the history of the Kabbalah:

- A. Quantitatively speaking, Byzantine kabbalistic works did not fall short, neither in scope or impact, to those composed in the Iberian Peninsula during this period.
- B. In terms of ideas, we are speaking of Byzantium as a center of kabbalistic study possessing its own character: its Kabbalah retained a blend of Prophetic Kabbalah and Theosophical Kabbalah, originating especially from the school of R. Joseph Ashkenazi. We are not speaking of just a new synthesis of different strands of kabbalistic materials,¹⁶⁶ but rather that Byzantine Kabbalah was reconceptualized through the encounters between kabbalistic trends that remained outside of the general consensus of Spanish Kabbalah, or types of Spanish Kabbalah that were not accepted in Spain, and the Prophetic Kabbalah.
- C. During this period, the Spanish Kabbalists did not produce even one classic work of Kabbalah. In contrast, the books *Qanah* and *Peliy'ah*, *Sefer Shushan Sodot*, and it seems we can include *Sefer ha-Temunah* as well as other works belonging to this circle, all became frequently quoted works from the fifteenth century onwards, until they were printed by the Hassidim during the eighteenth century.
- D. In light of these three conclusions, we can confirm the great importance of the Byzantine center for the general development of the Kabbalah. Without a proper understanding of the processes that

¹⁶⁶ I hope to discuss elsewhere the possibility of a relationship between Abulafia and R. Joseph Ashkenazi.

enabled the appearance of this center, or the ideas that are indigenous to it, we would find it most difficult to gain a proper understanding of the kabbalistic phenomena enumerated here:

1. The character of “Byzantine” Kabbalah during the fifteenth century was dependant upon the encounter between Spanish Kabbalah and local Kabbalah. This is the case for the anonymous author of the book *Kaf ha-Qetoret*, displayed as well in his other commentaries, and other works like *Sefer 'Agudat 'Ezov*, and in the content of *Sefer Razi'el ha-Mal'akh*.
2. The kabbalistic thought of R. David ben Avi Zimrah was deeply influenced by *Sefer ha-Temunah* and in some measure by Abulafian Kabbalah as well. This is also true in the case of R. Moshe Cordovero, as well as R. Shlomoh Alqabetz, who displays in his works a similar blend of kabbalistic conceptions. Although the centrality of the Spanish Kabbalah for these authors remains unchallenged, a more nuanced appreciation of the deep structure of their thought must take into account the contributions of Italian Kabbalah as well as Byzantine Kabbalah.
3. Sabbatai Tzvi's brand of Kabbalah exhibits the influence of Byzantine Kabbalah, especially in its accentuation on revelatory experience. He himself delved into the study of the books *Qanah* and *Peliy'ah* and, as M. Benayahu has amply shown, these books became very popular among the Sabbateans.¹⁶⁷
4. As opposed to the Spanish Kabbalah composed before 1325 and then again at the close of the fifteenth century, prior to the Expulsion and just after it, which was original and conceptually innovative—most of the Byzantine Kabbalah was of an eclectic type. Byzantine originality expressed itself in its willingness to interweave different strands of kabbalistic thought, and this synthesis is exemplified by the majority of the kabbalistic works that beyond doubt were composed in Byzantium.

It should be emphasized that although Byzantine Kabbalah can be characterized by its synthesis of two kabbalistic trends that were not

¹⁶⁷ See M. Benayahu, *The Sabbatean Movement in Greece* (Jerusalem, 1971–1978), 350–5 (Hebrew). See also M. Idel, “The Planet Sabbatai and Sabbatai Tzvi: A New Approach to Sabbateanism,” *Jewish Studies* 37 (1997): 161–84 (Hebrew); idem, “On Prophecy and Magic in Sabbateanism,” *Kabbalah* 8 (2003): 7–50.

accepted within Spain, this does not mean that it rejected out of hand Spanish or Provençal Kabbalah. The writings of R. Isaiah ben Joseph ha-Levi, *Sefer 'Even Sappir*, and certainly *Sefer ha-Qanah* and *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah* as well as *Sefer Shushan Sodot* are replete with copied passages—at times even plagiaristic—stemming from the Theosophical-Theurgical school of Spanish Kabbalah. We are not speaking of a ban on Spanish Kabbalah but rather a preference for absorbing kabbalistic systems of thought that were not integrated within the main stream of Iberian Kabbalah. In the lands of the Byzantine Empire, perhaps due to the absence therein of significant authoritative rabbinic personalities,¹⁶⁸ these trends flourished in an atmosphere which could foster, undisturbed, even more daring notions.

¹⁶⁸ On the subject of the *Halakhah* in the Byzantine Empire see the pioneering studies of I. Ta-Shma, *Assembled Studies: Inquiries into Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, Vol. III: Italy and Byzantium (Jerusalem, 2005), (Hebrew).

CULTURAL EXCHANGES BETWEEN JEWS AND CHRISTIANS IN THE PALAEOLOGAN PERIOD

Marie-Hélène Congourdeau

In 1985, in his book *The Jews of Byzantium*, Steven Bowman writes: “Unfortunately, our sources are such that it is difficult, if not impossible, to examine the interaction of Jews and Christians and the contributions of the former to Byzantine society. (...) Further research, especially into the intellectual story of latter-day Byzantium, may well uncover what we suspect to be a mutual give and take among Jewish and Christian scholars. Too little work has been done, however, to do more than estimate the contact, let alone delineate its results.”¹

Twenty years later, Anne Tihon, in a symposium on the subject of Byzantine scholars, said: “The Jewish influence on the Byzantine scholarly world of the fifteenth century is a phenomenon still poorly known, poorly studied, and poorly explained.”²

I do not pretend to meet the expectations of these scholars. Much research is still needed, mainly involving manuscripts, to begin defining the cultural exchanges between both communities in the last centuries of Byzantium. But a first step, it seems, should be an inventory: what do we know about these exchanges? That is what I intend to provide in this article, hoping that this work will clear the field for future research.

I. WRONG TRACKS

The first thing necessary when clearing a field is to sweep away the wrong tracks. Some of these illusive tracks are the so-called dialogues between Jews and Christians about religion. I do not know whether such dialogues exist in Jewish sources. I will limit myself to Christian

¹ S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium, 1204–1453* (Tuscaloosa, 1985), 169.

² A. Tihon, “Astronomy between Ptolemaeus, Persia, the Jewish World and the West,” Symposium “Mandarini bizantini” in Venezia, June 2005 (in press).

sources, based on the catalogue made by Külzer in 1999.³ What kind of Jews are found in these texts?

In 1310, Andronicus Comnenus Doukas Palaeologue, the nephew of Emperor Andronicus II, wrote *Dialogue of a Christian with a Jew*, which was published in a Latin translation.⁴ According to his account, Andronicus relates some discussions that he had in Constantinople, Orestias, and Thessaly, with Jewish “scholars and lawyers”⁵ who asked him about Christianity. He says too that in Orestias he had occasion to read a “Jewish book,” by a lawyer called Elias, which contained the genealogies of Mary and Joseph.⁶ Many questions arise from this statement, for example, did this Elias from Orestias ever exist? In which language was the book written? If it was in Hebrew, did Andronicus read it himself (which would suggest that he knew that language), or had it been translated by Elias? Possibly his account echoes real meetings, but it is difficult to measure the part played by literary reconstruction.

It is easier to dismiss the Jew Xenos in the *Discourses against the Jews* of John Cantacuzenus.⁷ The emperor presents this Xenos as a Pharisee of the tribe of Judah, whom he met in Mistra. Three elements make us doubt his existence: his name, Xenos (the Greek word for “stranger”, which is rather strange), his definition as a Pharisee, a notion alien to the Romaniote Jews (but we could think of a Rabbanite Jew) and the mention of the tribe of Judah. Theophanes of Nicaea, a contemporary of Cantacuzenus, who also wrote a *Contra Iudaeos*, indicates that the Jews of his time have nothing in common with those of the Bible, mainly because they do not even know to which tribe they belong.⁸ Lastly, Cantacuzenus’s Jew asks for baptism at the end of the

³ A. Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos: Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen antijüdischen Dialogliteratur und ihrem Judenbild*, Byzantinisches Archiv 18 (Stuttgart, 1999).

⁴ PG 133, 795–924.

⁵ “Sophistais kai nomothési”: in Greek in a footnote (PG 133, 795).

⁶ About these Jewish books, which in Christian apologies, show the truth of Christianity, mainly through hidden genealogies, cf. G. Dagron, “Jésus prêtre du judaïsme: le demi-succès d’une légende,” in *Leimôn, Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. J. Rosenqvist, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 6 (Uppsala, 1996), 11–24.

⁷ Cf. C. Soteropoulos, *Ióannou VI Kantakouzènou kata Ioudaiòn Logoi ennéa* (Athènes, 1983).

⁸ Cf. I. Polemis, *Theophanes of Nicaea: His Life and Works*, Wiener Byzantinische Studien, Band XX (Wien, 1996), 172–3.

meeting. I do not mean that some Jews were not baptized at this time in the Byzantine empire: some famous converts fulfilled their careers in the Church, among them perhaps Patriarch Philotheus, if his Jewish origin is not a polemical invention, and certainly the monk Macarius, who was the confessor of Manuel II. But the conversion of a Jew at the end of a discussion, the text of which was written by a Christian, is likely to be a literary fiction.

The Jew from Thessaly, whom Scholarios calls "Byzantine" (a Romaniote, then) in the *Denunciation of the Jewish Error* that he wrote after the fall of Constantinople, does not give us any more information. He too accepts the arguments of his Christian partner and asks for baptism.⁹

Let us finally turn our attention to the Jews of Medeia mentioned by Theophanes, the metropolitan of Medeia, in the title of his own anti-Jewish treatise: *Discourse to some learned Jews that he had met in Medeia*. These learned Jews of Medeia probably existed, but they appear only in this title and we know nothing else about them.¹⁰

Most of these tracks, if they are not all wrong and if we can admit that they follow from real meetings, fail to teach us anything concrete about real exchanges between Jews and Christians at this time: indeed, the authors of these treatises distort their facts because their goal is to show the superiority of Christianity.

II. CONCRETE MEETINGS

Other testimonies, not distorted by a polemical goal, show us some meetings which are more likely to have happened.

A. *The Date of Easter*

Even though it was forbidden since the Council of Nicaea to establish the date of Christian Easter on the basis of the Jewish Passover, Byzantine clerics, owing to the complexity of the computation, which combines solar and lunar calendars, were forced to consult Jewish

⁹ G. Scholarios, "Denunciation of the Jewish Error", in *Œuvres complètes de Genade Scholarios*, eds., L. Petit, X. Sideridès and M. Jugie, Vol. III (Paris, 1930), 251–304.

¹⁰ Theophanes of Medeia (Theodore Agallianos): cf. Külzer, *Disputationes graecae*, 218–20.

calculations. Isaac Argyrus, in a letter on ecclesiastical computation, gives a table of correspondences which allows one to calculate the date of Easter with the help of lunar cycles and the Jewish Passover.¹¹ In a letter from 1341, the mathematician Artabasdos Rhabdas relates the circumstances in which he was brought to find a new method of calculation for the date of Easter. “As I was talking with a Jew about our faith,” he says, “he put forward in his favor that without the Jewish Passover, we cannot find ours; I then worked on that question and found a method which is remarkable in that it finds our holy Easter on the basis of the Jewish Passover.”¹² We have here the mark of a theological discussion in which the subordination of Christian Easter to the Jewish Passover is put forward by a Jew in order to prove the superiority of Judaism. This Jew, about whom we know nothing else, possesses an existential depth more real than those whom we have seen until now.

The same question is evoked by Isaac Argyrus in his treatise about the date of Easter in 1373. “Fifty years ago,” he writes (then, in 1323), “when I was still young, while I lived in a town called Aenos, I saw some Jews who live there celebrate their own Passover on March 20th, while we celebrated our holy Easter on April 23th.”¹³ Even if Argyrus does not notice here some personal contact with the Jewish community of Aenos, it is clear that some form of cultural exchange did take place, since it is precisely that observation which helps him develop a method to calculate the date of Easter.

B. *The Teachings of Mordehai Comtino*

If we move, however, to the other side of the mirror, the Jewish side, we find a very interesting testimony, that of Mordehai Comtino, a

¹¹ Cf. PG 19, 1297.

¹² Nicholas Artabasdos Rhabdas of Smyrna, *Letter to Théodore Tzaboukes of Clazomènes*, § 12, ed., P. Tannery, “Sciences exactes chez les Byzantins,” in *Mémoires scientifiques* 4 (Paris, 1920), 135–6.

¹³ I. Argyros, “On the Date of Easter,” in *Paris. gr.* 2511, f. 99; quoted by A. Tihon and R. Mercier in the edition of Pletho’s *Handbook of Astronomy*, A. Tihon and R. Mercier, *Georges Gemiste Pléthon. Manuel d’astronomie*, Corpus des Astronomes Byzantins IV (Louvain la neuve, 1998), n. 5 p. 7. Giovanni Mercati notes that this interval of 32 days between both feasts is due to the fact that the full moon happened on April 18th that is 28 days after the vernal equinox: *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri appunti per la storia della teologia e della letteratura bizantina del secolo XIV*, Studi e Testi 56 (Citta del Vaticano, 1931), 234.

Rabbanite scholar of the end of the Byzantine empire, who pursued his career under the Ottomans.

A Romaniote of Constantinople, Comtino (or Khomatiano) seems well integrated into Byzantine culture. Although he writes in Hebrew, his works often give, for some terms of astronomy or medicine, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word.¹⁴ Should we bring this fact together with Theophanes of Nicaea's comment, which is that the Jews of his time do not know Hebrew, and conclude that only the scholars like Comtino mastered this language so that it was necessary to give Greek equivalents, or should we see in it a mark that his readers were not all Jewish? I leave the question open.

In any case, Comtino knows the Christians' methods of teaching. In the introduction to his *Elements of Geometry and Arithmetic*, he says: "I conformed to the methods of Christians, who are brief in order that the pupil may not become lost."¹⁵ On the other hand, by defending Persian tables against the attacks of Isaac Argyrus he takes part in the quarrel concerning the rivalry between the old astronomic tables of Ptolemy and the modern tables of the Persians which divides the Byzantine astronomers of the fifteenth century.¹⁶

But what is even more interesting for us is the fact that Comtino probably had some Christian pupils. The Karaite, Yosef ben Moshe Begi, who writes after the fall of Constantinople, says about Comtino and other Rabbanite teachers: "These teachers were teaching our Karaite brothers, and not only them, but also others, Muslim or Christian, from those who are among us."¹⁷ The allusion to Muslims directs us to the Ottoman period. On the other hand, an anecdote related by Ephraim ben Gershon should probably be situated before 1453. Describing a journey which he made to Constantinople, this physician from Verroia says that while he was with Comtino, "a Greek prince came, bringing some sketches of both lights (Sun and Moon), and of the course of the Sun from East to West, and he asked him to let him know the climates." Comtino answered the prince's questions, and then this personage departed "in his coach, with the servant who

¹⁴ J.-C. Attias, *Le commentaire biblique, Mordekhai Komtino ou l'herméneutique du dialogue* (Paris, 1991), 32.

¹⁵ BN Ms. Hébr. 1031, f 26v, quoted by Attias, *Le commentaire biblique*, 32, n. 96.

¹⁶ According to Tihon, "Astronomy," Comtino is the only scholar who notices the hostility of Argyros toward the Persian tables.

¹⁷ Cf. J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History & Literature*, II, *Karaitica* (Philadelphia, 1935; réimp 1972), 311.

was with him.” This visit of a Greek prince to the Jewish astronomer cannot easily be placed after the fall of the city, when Greek princes did not travel in such style. Attias concludes with regard to Comtino: “A Jew from Verroia and a Christian from Constantinople were able to meet under his roof.”¹⁸

We possess another testimony from the pen of Comtino himself. In his commentary on the Pentateuch, he writes about the stone Tablets of the Law, as follows: “I too, Mordehai, the author of the present work, have seen some of these stones which a Christian priest had brought to me; he said he had taken them from Mount Sinai.”¹⁹ Thus, not only Greek princes, but also Christian priests, held erudite conversations with the Jewish scholar.

C. *Elisha, Pletho's Teacher*

Another Jewish scholar who had at least one Christian pupil was the famous Elisha, or Elissaios, who initiated Pletho into eastern philosophy during one of Pletho's visits to Andrinople (or in Prusa),²⁰ where Elisha had a certain amount of influence at the Ottoman court. This Elisha is known only through two letters of Scholarios, one to the princess Theodora Asenina about the cause of Pletho's apostasy,²¹ and the other to the exarch Joseph about the destruction of Pletho's *Treatise on Laws*.²²

Scholarios writes to the princess: “This Jew was fond of Averroes and the other Persian and Arabic commentators on Aristotle whom the Jews have translated into their own language. As to Moshe and what the Jews believe and practice through him, [this Jew] did not care. This man exposed to Pletho the doctrines about Zoroaster and the others. Through this man—apparently a Jew, but actually a pagan, whom he not only associated with as his teacher, but served when necessary, and who gave him his subsistence, because he was one of the more powerful in the court of these barbarians, his name was Elissaios—through this man, then, he achieved the identity that he attained.”

¹⁸ Attias, *Le commentaire biblique*, 13.

¹⁹ Attias *Le commentaire biblique*, 37.

²⁰ Cf. C. Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford, 1998), 26–7.

²¹ Scholarios, *Œuvres*, IV, 151–5.

²² Scholarios, *Œuvres*, IV, 155–72.

In his letter to the exarch Joseph, Scholarios rhetorically questions Pletho: "You did not know Zoroaster before; Elissaios, apparently a Jew, but actually a polytheist, made you know him. Escaping from your homeland in order to receive his beautiful teaching, you lived at the table of this man, who at that time was very influential at the court of the barbarians; because he was thus, he experienced death by fire, as probably also did your Zoroaster."²³

If we give credit to this quite unobjective source, about a man considered by Scholarios as the corruptor of Pletho, we have here a fairly irreligious Jew, who is more interested in Greek philosophy than in Moses, a commentator on Aristotle, who had great influence at the Ottoman court. He "experienced death by fire":²⁴ we are unable to determine here whether he was the victim of an accident²⁵ or of a death sentence.²⁶ In any case, there is a significant chance that we have here another concrete example of contacts between a Jew and a Christian, if we can call "Jew" and "Christian" two men who do not seem to have attached great importance to religion.

III. CULTURAL EXCHANGES

Let us turn to cultural exchanges, understanding exchanges to mean, strictly speaking, a communication in both directions. They concern mostly the secular sciences: astronomy, medicine, philosophy.

A. Astronomy²⁷

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw a great flow of translations in both directions. The passage first went from Greek to Hebrew: we have already seen that Comtino uses Byzantine science for his own lessons. At the end of the fourteenth century, in Thessalonica, a

²³ Cf. M. Tardieu, "Pléthon lecteur des Oracles," *Méthis* 2 (1987): 141–64.

²⁴ Scholarios, *Œuvres*, IV, 162.

²⁵ A. Tihon evokes the fire of Andrinople in 1444 or 1446: Tihon-Mercier, *Georges-Gemiste Pléthon*, 8.

²⁶ Cf. Woodhouse, *Pletho*, 27.

²⁷ About exchanges between Jewish and Christian astronomers under the Palaiologans, cf. P. Gardette, "Judæo-Provençal Astronomy in Byzantium and Russia (14th–15th century)," *Byzantinoslavica* 63 (2005): 195–210; A. Tihon, "L'astronomie byzantine à l'aube de la Renaissance (de 1352 à la fin du 15e s.)," *Byzantion* 66 (1996): 244–80; P. Solon, "The Six Wings of Immanuel Bonfils and Michael Chrysococces," *Centaurus* 15 (1970): 1–20.

Karaite Romaniote, Shlomo ben Eliyahu Sharbit ha-Zehav, compiles in Hebrew the *Persian Syntaxis*, a commented edition, by the Byzantine George Chrysokokkes, of the astronomical tables which George Chioniades had translated from the Persian. We will admire in passing the itinerary of these tables from Persian to Greek and from Greek to Hebrew. Comtino himself wrote an apology of this *Persian Syntaxis* against Isaac Argyrus.

The fifteenth century saw the beginning of a movement in the other direction, from Jewish to Greek astronomy. By 1410, Michael Chrysokokkes had translated into Greek the astronomical tables of Isaac ben Shlomo ben Tsadiq, a Jew of Sicilia, and by 1435, the *Six Wings* of Immanuel ben Jacob Bonfils, a Jew of Tarascon. The *Six Wings* saw other translations, one of them in Crete in 1467, which ascribed them to a so-called "Manuel," while the tables of Isaac ben Shlomo were also translated into Greek by Matthew Camariotes, who ascribed them to "a Jew of Spain called Isaac." Mark of Ephesus had written by 1448 a commentary on the tables of Jacob Yom Tobh from Perpignan (whom he calls "a Jew called Jacob, a mathematician of Italy"). Pletho himself depended on the *Six Wings* for his astronomical works.

Where did this enthusiasm for Jewish astronomy originate? Michael Chrysokokkes makes us aware that there was at this time a large production of Jewish astronomical tables in Byzantium; he also says that it was impossible to ignore them because they were easy to use. Anne Tihon notices that the only Jewish tables translated into Greek are the ones concerning the syzygies, a matter which interests primarily the Church, because it helps with the calculation of liturgical feasts.²⁸ We must emphasize that these are exclusively western tables, composed by Jews from France or Italy, so that we cannot exclude the possibility that these translations were made from Latin rather than from Hebrew. Must we conclude that the exchanges between Byzantines and Romaniotes were not easy, or that the ignorance of the Hebrew language forced the Byzantines to use tables already translated in Latin, even if they came from elsewhere and required geographical correctives?

B. *Medicine*

If we turn to medicine, we can also glean some elements of information. Although the seventh-century Council of Trullo had forbid-

²⁸ Tihon, "Mandarini bizantini..."

den Christians to use Jewish physicians, the insistant reminder of this interdiction by the patriarch Athanasius in the fourteenth century, and again by the preacher Joseph Bryennius in the fifteenth century, seems to indicate that Christians in the empire persisted in seeking help from Jewish physicians.

An investigation of medical manuscripts allows us to collect, among the authors of medical receipts, a "Benjamin the Jew (*Ioudaiou iatrou Beniamin*)," who translated some receipts from Arabic to Greek²⁹ and composed others. On the other hand, it is not easy to know whether the "Saracene Abram ibn Solomon" (*tou Sarakènou tou Abram ibn Solomôn*), who was, in the fifteenth century, *actouarios* of the hospital of Manges and imperial *archiiatros*,³⁰ was an Abraham ben Shlomo, that is a Jew of Arabic language, or an Ibrahim ibn Suleyman, that is a Muslim or Christian Arab. But we must in any case eliminate from our list the "Hebrew Benzaphar ben Elgezar," mentioned in a manuscript, since this is the distorted name of the Arabic physician Al-Gazzar.³¹

C. Philosophy

Concerning philosophy, we find again our Elisha, Pletho's teacher. The inadequacy of the sources concerning this figure forces us into conjecture about his precise role in these cultural exchanges. Scholarios presents him as an expert on the Persian and Arabic commentaries on Aristotle, such as Averroes, and on commentaries on Zoroaster.³²

Michel Tardieu can thus postulate that this Elisha was an adept of the *falsafa*,³³ versed in both traditions of Aristotelian commentaries, which the Jewish philosophers inherited—the tradition of Averroes, well known by Spanish Jews—and that of Persian commentators, which was more familiar to Ottoman Jews. Pletho would be indebted to him for both his commentaries on Aristotle, in the line of Averroes, and his commentaries on the *Chaldaic Oracles*, in the line of *ishraq*, that contemplative conception of philosophy, which comes out

²⁹ *Marc. gr. App. Cl.V*, 8, dated from 1362.

³⁰ *Vatic. gr. 299*, f. 374; cf. T. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (Baltimore, 1985), 150; D. Bennett, "Three Xenon Texts," *Medicina nei Secoli. Arte e Scienza* 11/3 (1999): 514.

³¹ *Vindob. Med. Gr.* 30, f. 12.

³² Scholarios, *Œuvres*, IV, 152: "This Jew was attached to Averroes and other Persian and Arabic commentators of Aristotle, whom the Jews have translated in their own language. (...) It is this man who exposed to him (Pletho) the doctrines about Zoroaster and others."

³³ Tardieu, "Plethon lecteur des oracles."

of the Persian philosophical tradition.³⁴ He himself does not deny this debt: "We, dear," he writes to Scholarios, "have learnt through Jews Averroes' opinion about the human soul."³⁵

It is thus a Jew who transmitted to the last Byzantine philosopher the Oriental philosophical tradition (Arabic and Persian) which lies at the foundation of his original philosophy.

IV. RELIGIOUS CONTACTS?

Secular sciences represent common property, the place par excellence of cultural exchanges. May we go beyond these and imagine some exchanges in the religious field? The relations between Hesychasm and the Sufism of Anatolia are only beginning to be studied. What about the reciprocal influence between Hesychasm and Kabbala, for instance the mysticism of Abraham Abulafia?

The hypothesis of reciprocal influence has been expressed and denied several times.³⁶ I will simply evoke some puzzling analogies.

Let us first say that contacts were possible during the journey that Abulafia made to the East before 1250. At this time, the hesychastic quarrel was far from having begun, but the movement of spiritual reform was already stirring. Abulafia remained in Greece for several years and married a Greek woman. After a stay in the West, he returned to Greece in 1273 and was still in Patras in 1279. At that time the trial and exile of Nicephorus the Hesychast, the author of a hesychastic method of prayer, took place because of his opposition to the Union of Churches.

Having proposed the possibility of real contacts between Abulafia and monks who were fond of the spirituality that we call Hesychasm, let us examine some points of contact between the doctrine of Abulafia and that of Byzantine mystics.

³⁴ Cf. B. Tambrun, *Pléthon. Oracles chaldaiques*, Corpus philosophorum Medii aevi. Philosophi byzantini 7 (Athènes, 1995).

³⁵ Pletho, *Retort to Scholarios*, PG 160, 982; cf. 1011.

³⁶ Cf. M. Idel, *L'expérience mystique d'Abraham Abulafia* (Paris, 1989); E. Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia, cabaliste et prophète: herméneutique, théosophie et théurgie*, trans. J.-F. Sené (Paris, 1999).

A. *The Method of Prayer*³⁷

The method of prayer taught by Abulafia meets the hesychastic method of prayer on three points. The first is the posture: the one who prays must isolate himself in a retired place and sit; Gregory the Sinaite specifies that he must sit on a low bench in order to be in a crouching position. The second point is control of the breath. The pupil of Abulafia and the hesychast must both inhale slowly (“as slowly as possible,” Abulafia specifies), hold their breath, exhale slowly, and then “hold on the return of the breath.” And third: the attention must be fixed on the stomach, more precisely on the navel, which represents the place of the heart.

Finally, Abulafia’s pupils and the hesychasts agree and disagree about the goal of the method: they agree because the goal is to invoke the name of God; they disagree because the hesychast concentrates exclusively on the name of Jesus, whereas Abulafia recites the letters of the Tetragramm and other names of God. Thus we have unicity on one side (the name of Jesus), multiplicity on the other (the letters of the divine name), but one and the same goal: to unify the intellect by eliminating the thoughts which distract one’s attention.

B. *The Effects of the Prayer*

A second point of contact lies in the effects of the prayer. In both cases, a well executed prayer leads to a sensation of warmth—“your heart is warming, through your turning of the letter,” Abulafia says, and similar expressions are found in Gregory the Sinaite and Gregory Palamas—to an inexpressible joy, mixed with softness, expressed in both traditions by the same words of exultation and happiness, at last to luminous phenomena: in both cases, everything becomes light, even the face of the one who is praying.

C. *Theological Conceptualisation*

A final point of contact may be suggested. Gregory Palamas, who was willing to defend the hesychast prayer, which was attacked mainly because it asserted a participation of the hesychast in God himself, proposed the distinction in God between the divine essence, totally

³⁷ Cf. A. Rigo, “Le tecniche d’orazione esicastica e le potenze dell’anima in alcuni testi ascetici bizantini,” *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi* 4 (1984): 75–115.

inaccessible; and the divine operations or energies, eternal and uncreated like God, but accessible to human experience (light, grace, goodness, etc.). Could we not compare this distinction, characteristic of Palamite theology, to the conception of the Sefirot by Abulafia? For him, indeed, the Sefirot are attributes of God, which can be known through the divine names, but at the same time, these attributes to which man can have access are, like Palamas's energies, uncreated and inseparable from the inaccessible essence of God.

All of this must be said cautiously, as an hypothesis. The ties between hesychasm and Abulafia's Kabbalah have not yet been analyzed seriously enough to draw definitive conclusions. I am satisfied simply to explore the problem, since, whatever the final answer may be, the matter is not unrelated to our subject. Where do these puzzling similitudes come from? From meetings between Abulafia and hesychastic monks? Or from contacts between Abulafia and Sufis? For this game actually implies three partners—perhaps even four, if we take into account some hypothetical Asiatic influences coming from India through the Mongols. The question remains open.

V. CONCLUSION

It is time to take stock. To begin with, looking for signs of cultural exchanges between Jews and Christians in the Palaeologan era seems a challenge. By reading the Byzantine and Romaniote sources, we have sometimes the impression of two worlds which ignore each other: the concrete Jews (not the imaginary Jews) are by and large absent from Byzantine sources whereas the concrete Christians (not the imaginary *goyim*) are no less absent from the Romaniote sources. Nevertheless, some fields suggest contact: this is the case with the secular sciences, especially astronomy, owing to its implications for the Christian liturgical calendar. Whether or not Jews and Christians acknowledged, they shared the same roots for some liturgical computations. Thus, we can see that some Christians needed the work of the Jews in order to understand how they dealt with the thorny problem which correlates the solar cycle, the phases of the moon, and the days of the week, even if they strove to prove that the main Christian feast was not dependent on Jewish calculations. Nevertheless, academic brotherhood transcends these quarrels, as is shown by the influence of Comtino beyond the Romaniote community.

In any case, a more precise knowledge of both communities would allow us a more nuanced judgement about their relations. The tree of polemics cannot be allowed to continue hiding the forest of personal and cultural relations, without damage to historical science. Or should we say that the forest of polemics must no longer hide the tree of cultural relations?³⁸

³⁸ I would like to thank Michael Featherstone for correcting the English translation of this paper.

BYZANTINE KARAISM IN THE ELEVENTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

Golda Akhiezer*

I. BACKGROUND

Although Karaite origins are still a matter of historical debate, it is clear that this alternative form of Judaism, marked by its objection to Rabbinic literature and law, became crystallized in Islamic countries. The first initial dissidents were proto-Karaites or Karaites in Iraq and Iran in the eighth and ninth centuries, under such leaders as Anan ben David and Benjamin al-Nahāwendī.¹ The Land of Israel soon became the main center of the community, mainly because of the efforts of the late ninth-early tenth century Daniel ben Moses al-Qūmisī from Damghan in Iran. Al-Qūmisī called for immigration to the Land of Israel:

Hearken unto the Lord, arise and come to Jerusalem, so that we may return to the Lord. Or, if you will not come because you are running about in tumult and haste after your merchandise, then send out of every city five men, together with their sustenance, in order that we might form a united company to supplicate our God continually upon the hills of Jerusalem.²

The tenth and eleventh centuries became known as the “Golden Age of Karaism” since it was during this period that Karaite law, exegesis, theology, and philology was standardized. Many in the community were identified with the “Mourners of Zion” (*aveilei Ziyyon*), who believed that a life of piety and ascetic devotion, the ideal of poverty, prayer,

* I would like to express my gratitude to Daniel J. Lasker for his important remarks and comments.

¹ Despite the widespread belief that Anan ben David, the unsuccessful candidate for exilarch was the founder of Karaism, his group were the Ananites who only later became absorbed by the Karaites; on Karaite origins, see M. Gil, “The Origins of the Karaites,” in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, ed., M. Poliack (Leiden, 2003), 73–118.

² L. Nemoy, “The Pseudo-Qūmisian Sermon to the Karaites,” *PAAJR* 43 (1976): 78; a discussion of the Jerusalem community can be found in H. Ben-Shammai, “The Karaites,” in *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period 638–1099*, eds., J. Prawer and H. Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem, 1996), 201–24.

and fasting would bring the Messiah. Karaite sages of the Golden Age included Sahl ben Maṣliāḥ (polemicist), Salmon ben Yeruḥim (polemicist and exegete), Joseph ben Noah (grammarian and exegete), Abū'l Faraj Hārūn (grammarian), Yefet ben 'Eli (exegete), Levi ben Yefet (legalist), Yūsuf al-Baṣīr (Joseph Ha-Ro'eh, euphemistically "The Blind," legalist and theologian), Yeshu'ah ben Judah (legalist, exegete and theologian), and David ben Abraham al-Fāsī (grammarian and exegete). During this period the Karaites were one among several Jewish legal schools (comparable to the *madhahib* in Islam).³

The Karaite community in the Land of Israel was destroyed by a combination of the Crusader (1099) and Seljuk (1171) invasions. Karaite refugees managed to resettle in different destinations, such as Fustat-Cairo in Egypt and Byzantium.

This article aims to trace the main tendencies in the spiritual life of Byzantine Karaites and to examine the influence and contribution of their scholarship on the literary and legal traditions and on the educational patterns of different Karaite communities.

II. THE BEGINNING OF THE KARAITE PRESENCE IN BYZANTIUM

Rabbanite Jewish communities had a long continual history in Byzantium,⁴ while Karaite origins in the empire are much less clear, since there are no Karaite, Rabbanite, or Christian historical sources at our disposal which can inform us about the beginning of Karaite settlement. The few sources which are available to scholars are scattered materials from the Cairo Genizah, among them Karaite private letters and a few colophons on manuscripts. Some halakhic discussions in Karaite treatises can help to reconstruct different aspects of their community life, professional occupation, and relations with Rabbanites and Christians. The scanty sources we have at our disposal yield only a partial reconstruction of the history of Karaites in Byzantium.

According to Zvi Ankori, Karaite origins in Byzantium should be dated no earlier than the second half of the tenth century. By the middle of the eleventh century, namely before the first Crusade, organized Karaite communities were already in existence.⁵

³ On relations between Karaites and other Jews, see: M. Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Ithaca, 2008).

⁴ J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 614-1204* (Athens, 1939).

⁵ Z. Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium* (New York, 1959), 85.

III. THE INFLUENCE OF THE JERUSALEM KARAITE SCHOOL AND THE BEGINNING OF BYZANTINE KARAITE LITERARY ACTIVITY

The spiritual life of Byzantine Karaites was significantly influenced by the Jerusalem center, with which they kept close ties during its existence. Byzantine Karaites went to Jerusalem to study under the famous scholars of the holy city, and thus they strengthened the connections between both communities, while preparing a new generation of scholars and community leaders in Byzantium.

Information about the Jerusalem-Byzantine connection can be derived from the letters of Tobias ben Moses,⁶ a Byzantine Karaite, who flourished in the first half of the eleventh century. During his youthful stay in Jerusalem, he called himself a "Mourner of Zion," but later he became a leader of the Byzantine community and was no longer one of the Mourners. In Jerusalem he studied biblical exegesis, philosophy, Karaite law, and other subjects under the tutelage of the scholar Yūsuf al-Basīr, a teacher of Yeshu'a ben Judah.⁷ The Jerusalem school elaborated a new interpretation of Karaite law, especially concerned with such topical issues as incest legislation (*rikkub*),⁸ which the Jerusalem scholars, such as al-Basīr and Yeshu'a ben Judah tried to liberalize. Tobias ben Moshe developed their system further. After his return to Byzantium, in the forties of the eleventh century, Tobias traveled among Byzantine communities and stayed for some time in Egypt, where he was employed by the Karaite nobleman Abraham Tustary as a scribe or secretary. In his letters, Tobias mentions some of his vicissitudes, including imprisonment in Damietta, and his worry about his only daughter, who stayed with "that adulterous woman" (apparently her mother). About 1048 Tobias returned to Constantinople.⁹ In this period Tobias became the central authority for Byzantine Karaite communities. As one can see from Tobias's letter, he intended to enact some rulings on liturgical matters:

⁶ J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature I* (Cincinnati, 1931), 383–5; Z. Ankori, "The Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses of Constantinople," *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought: Presented in Honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron*, eds., J. Blau, A. Hertzberg, P. Friedman and I. Mendelsohn (New York, 1959), 1–38.

⁷ Ankori, *Karaites*, 49–50.

⁸ Karaite legislation that defines the degrees of kinship, which are prohibited for marriage. These marriage restrictions extended to so many degrees of kinship that a possibility of finding a marital partner became very problematic.

⁹ Ankori, "Correspondence."

In all the communities of the Land of Edom whether near and far. And I shall decree that every Monday and Thursday people should recite a blessing for my honored Lord in synagogues.¹⁰

With these words Tobias promised his patron to spread his name among Byzantine communities. In this period he had the authority to enact decrees in all of the Byzantine Karaite communities and to fix the regulations of Karaite halakhah.

The young Karaite intellectuals already mentioned, who acquired their education in Jerusalem, began their literary activity in the middle of the eleventh century. Tobias ben Moses, his younger contemporary Jacob ben Shimon,¹¹ and others translated a large number of treatises from Arabic into Hebrew. According to Ankori, all Hebrew Karaite works of the late ninth to the early tenth centuries in Byzantium should be considered Palestinian Hebrew originals, while all available Hebrew versions of exegetical, philosophical, and legalistic works stemming from the late tenth through the eleventh century could be perceived as Byzantine translations of Palestinian Arabic originals. This consistent pattern, however, is not relevant for polemical writings and liturgical poems.¹²

Here is the place to mention that the Karaite immigrants who came to the Byzantine Empire were Arabic-speaking and the next generation also knew this language to some extent. There were no great scholars among the first generation of Byzantine Karaites and most of them were not experts in halakhah, exegesis, and even the Hebrew language, which unlike Arabic and Greek was not yet developed enough as a literary and philosophic language and lacked basic terminology before Tibbonids and Kimhi's activity. Therefore, their Hebrew translations were of mediocre or even bad quality. The thirteenth-century Karaite author Aaron ben Joseph was aware of this problem. He remarked: "We know that their books were translated from Arabic into Hebrew language and the translator was not an expert in the both languages."¹³

¹⁰ Ankori, *ibid.*, App., letter B/II, l. 24–25, p. 38.

¹¹ His name became known due to his Hebrew translation of the treatise on *Rikkub*, composed by his teacher, Joshua ben Judah. A large number of Greek expressions in his translation is evidence of his Byzantine origin. On him see: Mann II, *ibid.*, 43, 287; S. Pinsker, *Likkutei Kadmoniyot* (Vienna, 1860), 93; 171–2.

¹² Ankori, *Karaites*, 190.

¹³ Aaron ben Joseph, *Mivhar Yesharim*, (The Choice of the Upright), (with Jeremiah-Chronicles section of *Sefer ha-'Osher*) (Evpatoria, 1936), 2a.

In any case, they continued their translation of Arabic texts, and in Ankori's opinion, the main motive for their literary project was neither the diffusion of Hebrew, which allegedly served as a language of communication, nor the popularization of Arabic among the Greek-speaking Karaite population, as other scholars have assumed, but ideological, that is, the Hebraization of Byzantine Karaism.¹⁴

These literary activities of Byzantine scholars, especially in their first stages, had an eclectic character. They encompassed both translations of texts written by Arabic-speaking scholars and compilations of various texts with the addition of the translator's own comments. Some texts, dating to the forties and fifties of the eleventh century, were apparently the private notebooks and summaries compiled by Karaite disciples who had studied in Jerusalem.¹⁵ Tobias ben Moses, called "the translator" (*ha-ma'atiq*), translated a number of texts of Jerusalem scholars such as al-Basir's *Discourse on the Festivals* (*Sefer ha-Mo'adim*). Apparently his disciples translated the biblical commentary of Yefet ben 'Eli; Jacob ben Shimon translated the *Book of Incests* (*Kitab al-'Arayot*) by Joshua ben Judah into Hebrew. Many of the translated and compiled Karaite Byzantine texts remained anonymous, for example, the exegetic compilation on Exodus and Leviticus.¹⁶ In addition to his translations, Tobias ben Moses, who founded his own school, wrote the treatise *Oẓar Neḥmad*, the commentary on Leviticus, which included the issues of halakhah. He incorporated into his treatise long fragments from books by different authors, such as Joseph al-Baṣīr, Yefet ben 'Eli, David ben Boaz; therefore it was not a completely independent treatise. The scholar Jacob ben Reuben, who lived in the early twelfth century, based his compiled work *Sefer ha-'Osher* (the Book of Richness) on the exegesis of Yefet ben 'Eli. The latter Byzantine Karaite authors also depended to a large extent on the literary legacy of Golden Age.

IV. BYZANTINE KARAITE SCHOLARSHIP, TWELFTH-FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

After the cultural transfer of Golden Age Karaism from the Land of Israel to Byzantium in the eleventh century, by the twelfth century

¹⁴ Ankori, *Karaites*, 191–3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 426–31.

¹⁶ Pinsker, *Likkutei Kadmoniyot*, app. VII, p. 71 ff.

some Karaites were prepared to make original contributions to Karaite learning, even if they were still highly dependent upon earlier sources. The most prominent Byzantine Karaite scholar of the twelfth century was Judah ben Elijah Hadassi Ha-'Avel ("the Mourner"),¹⁷ whose major opus, *Sefer Eshkol ha-Koffer* (The Cluster of Henna),¹⁸ serves as a summa of Karaite Judaism as it had developed from the proto-Karaite Anan ben David to Hadassi himself. Both his legal determinations and his religious opinions seem to have their roots in his Karaite predecessors: Anan, Benjamin al-Nahāwendī, Daniel al-Qūmisī, Ya'qub al-Qirqisānī, Yefet ben 'Eli, Yūsuf al-Baṣīr (Joseph Ha-Ro'eh), Yeshu'ah ben Judah, and others.¹⁹ Hadassi is significant as a transitional figure, the last representative of the classical Karaism of the Land of Israel Mourners, and the first representative of new Byzantine forms of the religion.

Eshkol ha-Koffer by Hadassi encompasses the issues of halakhah, exegesis, philosophy, linguistics, and polemics against Rabbanites, Christianity, and Islam. This eclectic treatise represents most of the Karaite and Rabbanite legacy used by Byzantine Karaites over the course of more than 250 years. The book is divided into ten parts fol-

¹⁷ Not much is known about Judah Hadassi's life; see S. Skoss, "Hadassi, Jehuda ben Eliyahu ha-Abel," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 7 (Berlin, 1931), 773–8. The name Hadassi apparently indicates that his or his family's origin was Edessa in Asia Minor.

¹⁸ The name of the book is derived from the Song of Songs (1:14), Hadassi called the book *Sefer ha-Peles* (The Book of the Scales), p. 18a. The book was published first in Evpatoria, 1836, with Caleb Afendopolo's précis, *Naḥal Eshkol* (The Stream of the Cluster), which was composed in 1497. This edition was published by Abraham Firkovich, the Karaite leader in the Russian Empire, who became famous due to his collections of manuscripts and to his forgeries of tomb inscriptions and colophons. He censored the text and excluded all the passages concerning anti-Christian polemics and disdainful statements about gentiles. Thus, from the seventy-seven miracles expected to occur in the messianic times, he left only fifty-four because part of them are punishments for gentiles. He excluded entire chapters from the book and sequentially numbered the rest; therefore there is no correspondence between this edition and the existing manuscripts. This unique edition has been reprinted (Westmead, 1971), with an introduction by L. Nemoy and two additional articles, W. Bascher, "Unedited Chapters of Jehudah Hadassi's 'Eshkol Hakkofe,' " *JQR*, o.s., 8 (1896): 431–44; and A. Scheiber, "Homer she-bi-khtav yad la-avodato ha-sifrutit shel Yehudah Hadassi," in idem, ed., *Jubilee Volume in Honour of Prof. Bernhard Heller on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (Budapest, 1941), 101–29. The text alone has also been reprinted (Jerusalem, 1970), in addition to *Eshkol ha-Koffer*.

¹⁹ Hadassi himself tends to downplay the significance of his own composition, constantly citing his predecessors, even on those occasions when he disagrees with them and offers his own opinion; see, e.g., pp. 18a, 21c, 42a, 63c. Hadassi also cites Rabbanite sources; for his knowledge of Rabbanite grammatical works, see W. Bascher, "Jehuda Hadassi's Hermeneutik und Grammatik," *MGWJ* 40 (1896): 14–32, 68–84, 109–26.

lowing the Decalogue; each one includes various topics. This book, written in 1148–1149, has a most peculiar style: it contains 379 acrostics, which run alternately from beginning to end and then end to beginning (*alef* to *tav* and *tav* to *alef*), and every stanza ends with the Hebrew letter *khaf sofit* (*kha*). The syntax and style make deciphering the book very difficult, but it is possible to understand it with much effort.

The number ten appears in the text several times, apparently according to the Ten Commandments: Hadassi lists ten principles of Jewish belief, which preceded the thirteen principles suggested by Maimonides.²⁰ Hadassi also enumerates ten attributes of the unity and righteousness of God; ten Gates of Teshuva; ten merits of a wise man; ten merits of Israel; ten annunciations which will take place in the Holy Land.

Hadassi's philosophic outlook was quite traditional and even outdated for his time.²¹ he was an adherent of *kalām*.²² D. Lasker emphasizes that the new trends in modern Jewish philosophy, which were adopted by Hadassi's rabbinic contemporaries such as Judah Halevi, Abraham ibn Ezra, Abraham ibn Daud and others, were unknown to him.²³ Unlike them, he did not go in for Aristotelism, instead following the existing Karaite tradition. He did not introduce philosophic innovations and was dependant mostly on al-Basīr and Yeshu'ah ben Judah. He wrote about the attributes of God, substantiating His existence by his creation of the world and renewing of the world—by the wondrousness of its creatures (such as elephants, giraffes, monkeys, humanlike fish etc.).²⁴ Among Hadassi's main innovations in Karaite

²⁰ The ten principles of faith were primary formulated by Sa'adya Gaon, see: H. Ben-Shammai, "Sa'adya Gaon's Ten Articles of Faith," *Da'at* 37 (1996): 11–26 (Hebrew).

²¹ See: D. Lasker, "Byzantine Karaite Thought," in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, ed., M. Polliack (Leiden, 2003), 505–8. See also: D. Lasker, "The Philosophy of Judah Hadassi the Karaite," in *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume, on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, Part 1, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, Vol. VII, eds., M. Idel, W. Harvey, E. Schweid (Jerusalem, 1988), 477–92.

²² The Islamic philosophic discipline based on seeking theological principles through dialectic argumentation. The word is derived from the phrase "*kalām Allāh*" (Arab. "word of God"), which refers to the Qur'an. *Kalām* originated in the concept of God's attributes, correlated with the problems of monotheism, freedom of will, the fate of sinners in the afterlife, etc. Maimonides writes about an adherence of Karaites to *kalām* in *Moreh Nevukhim* 1, 71. See about it: P. Frankl, "Ein Mutazililitischer Kalama us dem zehnte Jahrhundert," *Sitzungberichte der philosophisch-historischen Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaft* 71 (Wien, 1872), 169–224.

²³ Lasker, "Mishnato ha-Philosophit," *ibid.*, 478.

²⁴ A. Scheiber, "Elements fabuleux dan L'Eshkol Hakofer de Juda Hadassi" *REJ* 108 (1948): 41–62.

tradition were seventy-four wonderful occurrences, which would accompany the coming of Messiah (part of them are the punishment of gentiles).

His view of Karaite *halakhah* was rigid and even ascetic. His principle was:

(239) If you see two scholars—one of them is rigid and another is alleviating in his observance, and you cannot decide whose opinion is preferable, do not alleviate, but be rigid in your observance of Torah.²⁵

He permitted mourning and lamenting on the Sabbath. He also upheld the validity of regulation concerning the impurity of a corpse in exile. He regarded the impurity of gentiles (which was valid in Second Temple period) as the impurity of a corpse. Hadassi was also opposed to the concept of reincarnation (גלגול).

Eshkol ha-Koffer also contains polemics against Christianity and Islam.²⁶ Hadassi contests the idea of incarnation of deity in human flesh.²⁷ He uses the words of Isaiah regarding Christians and Muslims alike: “They, who sanctify themselves, and purify themselves” (המתקדשים והמטהרים),²⁸ that is, those who baptize and wash their hands and legs before prayer, while their ways of life are unholy.

He refers to the translated Arabic text of Qirqisānī’s *Kitab ‘al-Anwar wal-Maraqib*—(Book of Lights and Watchtowers), written about 937 about the murder of Jesus by the Rabbanites. According to Qirqisānī, the Rabbanites accused Jesus of sorcery due to his use of the Tetragrammaton and they conspired and killed him, as they had unsuccessfully tried to kill Anan ben David.²⁹ Hadassi reproduces in his own words this Qirqisānī story.³⁰

²⁵ (רלט) במקום שתראה לחכמים זה מחמיר וזה מקל; ואינך יכול לשקול בין .
Jehudah Hadassi, *Eshkol ha-Koffer* (Evpatoria, 1836).

²⁶ The chapters about it (98 partly, 99 and 100 partly) were censored by Firkovich from the printed edition. They were published by W. Bascher, “Unedited Chapters of Jehudah Hadassi’s ‘Eshkol Hakkofer,’” *JQR* VIII (1896): 431–44. Bascher used the MS no. 53/130, National Library, Vienna.

²⁷ Bascher, *ibid.*, ch. 98, 432.

²⁸ Isaiah 66:17. Bascher, *ibid.*, ch. 99, 435.

²⁹ See the texts of *Kitab al-Anwar wal-Maraqib* by Qirqisānī: B. Chiesa and W. Lockwood, *Ya’qub Qirqisānī on Jewish sects and Christianity* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), 95 ff. (further—Qirqisānī), 135.

³⁰ Bascher, “Unedited Chapters,” ch. 99, 436. The story, which Hadassi reproduces in his book without any critical approach, played a very important role in the period of struggle of Russian Karaites for their emancipation, when they tried to convince the

Hadassi also borrowed from Qirqisānī in his passages on the history of Christianity, but he added anachronistic details, like placing Constantine and Helena in the same period as Peter and Paul. In this section he denies the principle of the trinity, the divine nature of Jesus, and his messianism.³¹ In his polemics against Christianity, Hadassi does not employ any argumentation, neither philosophical, nor textological, nor historical, but just explicates eclectic materials relating to this subject, including paraphrasing Christian history and its dogmas from Qirqisānī's book, at times misunderstanding it.

Hadassi drew an analogy between the method of Christological commentary and the Rabbinic method of reading, based on the oral tradition and different from the Masoretic one.³² He saw this method as a false and perverted way of interpreting Scripture.³³ Hadassi also attributed to the Rabbanites the belief in two powers. In Bascher's opinion, Hadassi meant the attributes of God—the qualities of justice and mercy. The concept of "two powers" is common in Rabbanite literature and appears also in the context of criticism against dualistic belief.³⁴ Here Hadassi apparently turned internal Rabbinic criticism into a Karaite polemical argument against Rabbanites.

Hadassi used a vast number of various Karaite and Rabbanite sources in *Eshkol ha-Koffer*, and this wide spectrum of treatises reflects what literature was available in this period for Byzantine Karaites. At Hadassi's disposal there were a large number of translations into Hebrew of Arab-writing scholars. The text of *Eshkol ha-Koffer* abounds with passages from Karaite authors, at times without referring to their names or the names of their books. The main Karaite sources utilized by Hadassi were: Anan ben David, Benjamin Nahāwendī, Ya'qub al-Qirqisānī (*Kitab 'al-Anwar wal-maraqib*), Daniel al-Qūmisī, Tobias ben Moses (*Oẓar Nehmad*), Salmon ben Yeruḥim, Joseph ben Noah, Sahal ben Mazliāḥ (*Grammar; Iggeret ha-Tokhehah—Epistle on*

authorities that Karaites, unlike the Rabbanites, did not participate in the crucifixion of Jesus. Abraham Firkovich reproduced this story in his anti-rabbinic book *Hotam Tokhnit* (Sealest up the Sum), published in Evpatoria in 1836, p. 54a, but he added a new detail, the murder of Anan by the Rabbanites. His purpose was to emphasize the analogy between Christians and Karaites and the differences between Karaites and Rabbanites.

³¹ Bascher, *ibid.*, ch. 99, 436–9.

³² Keri u-ketiv (קרי וכתוב).

³³ *Ibid.*, 432–3.

³⁴ See, for instance BT. Berakhot 33b.

Morality), Yefet ben 'Ali, David ben Boaz, Yūsuf al-Baṣīr (*Makhkimat Peti*—Which Gives Wisdom to the Ignorant; *Sefer Ne'imot*—Book of Melodies; *Sefer ha-Mizvot*—The Book of Commandments; *Merape Ezem*—Curative for Bone; *Matok le-Nefesh*—Sweet for the Soul; *Sefer ha-Nizanim*—The Book of Knospen), Isaak ben Bahalul, Joshua ben Judah, Joshua ben Aaron, Joshua ben Abraham, Abu Said ben Yefet ha-Levi, Natan, the brother of the author, and Ginay Barukh (this name is unknown).

Hadassi made ample use of Rabbanite literature, the list of which is much longer than that of the Karaites'. We find in *Eshkol ha-Koffer* passages from Sa'adya Gaon, Hai Gaon, Ben Asher, Abraham ibn Ezra, Eliezer Haklir, Judah Hayudzh, Shabbtai Donolo, Eldad Hadani, Jacob Gargirin. He also used the translation of Akelos ha-Ger, different tractates of the Babylonian Talmud, the Midrash, and other literature, such as *Bereshit Rabbah*; *Mekhilta*; *Seder Olam shel Benei Birav*; tractate *Pesikta Eikha Rabbati*; *Sifra*; *Midrash Tanhuma*; *Sefer Josippon*; *Maaseh Bereshit ve-Sefer Rabba de-Rabbi Ishmael* (The Work of Creation and the Book Rabba by R. Ishmael); *Divrei ha-Yamim shel Moses* (The Chronicles of Moses); *Petirato shel Moses* (The Demise of Moses). He referred as well to rabbinic halakhah of scholars of Babylonia and of the Land of Israel on different issues.

Despite his opposition to Rabbanism, Haddasi adopted a vast number of words and expressions typically found in Rabbinic literature. At the same time, Hadassi developed Hebrew by creating new words or changing their meaning. Among these new words are: 'ashur (אשור)—the principle of faith; maḥlif (מחליף)—deviates from the way of Torah; ba'ah (בעה)—prayed; gushmanim (גושמנים)—the opposite of immaterial; and qasmanuth (קסמנות)—sorcery.

The Hebrew of *Eshkol ha-Koffer* abounds in a large number of Greek glosses. This language was completely adopted by the Byzantine Karaites of Hadassi's generation.³⁵ The use of Greek glosses served an instrumental purpose, as did other glosses written by Jews in the course of history in their colloquial languages within Hebrew texts. It also served as a criterion of integration of Arabic-speaking Karaites in Byzantium. J. Starr points out that while Rabbanite Jews used written Greek to a limited degree, Karaites were familiar with Greek philo-

³⁵ See about the usage of Greek glosses in Rabbinic and Karaite texts: J. Starr, "A Fragment of a Greek Mishnaic Glossary," *PAAJR* VI (1934/5): 353–67.

sophic terminology.³⁶ However, he does not suggest an explanation of this phenomenon, which certainly requires further investigation and could yield more representative data in its diachronic perspective.

Hadassi ascribed great importance to the usage of Hebrew, maybe even more than his predecessors, hence one of his ten principles of faith was an obligation to learn Hebrew. Hebrew was an instrument of Karaite self-identification in a big Empire, where they were a negligible minority. At the same time, it was the only instrument for polemics with Rabbanites and the spread of Karaite doctrine among their own communities.

Hadassi was also an author of a number of treatises: the book *Trein Bitrein* (Two by Two), the supplement to ben Asher's treatise, where he lists combinations of two words from the Scripture, which only appear twice; the commentary on the *mizvot* of the Torah (preserved only on the Book of Leviticus); *Iggeret Teshuva* (The Epistle of Repentance), the answers of Joshua ben Judah, regarding the laws of incest. His liturgical poems were incorporated in Karaite prayer books.

Hadassi was an interjacent figure between the generations of the Karaite Golden Age with its Kalamitic hegemony and a new generation of Karaites, which integrated into the Byzantine cultural milieu.

We have no biographic material about another Karaite Byzantine scholar, Jacob ben Reuben, who lived at the late eleventh—the early twelfth century. He is known due to his exegetical treatise *Sefer ha-'Osher*.³⁷ In his introduction to this composition Jacob ben Reuben mentions that he was abroad while writing it. He visited the Land of Israel and other countries. His knowledge of Arabic was not perfect and he apparently also knew Persian to some extent (he explains some Persian words in his book). The name of his book implies that “who reads it grows rich.” The author's notion was that one can grow rich using this book without reading other commentaries on the Torah, since he prepared a compilation of the most classical Karaite exegetical works. He used different commentaries which were translated from Arabic into Hebrew by others. His book was based mainly on the exegesis of Yefet ben 'Eli. In some places Jacob ben Reuben just

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 355.

³⁷ Was published with *Mivḥar Yesharim*, see note 13.

incorporates in his book vast passages from Yefet ben 'Eli's exegesis, sometimes even in Arabic without Hebrew translation

In addition to Yefet ben 'Eli's texts, Jacob ben Reuben used a number of Karaite sources, mostly exegetical, including Anan, Ya'qub Qirqisānī, Benjamin Naḥāwendī, Daniel al-Qūmisī, Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, Joseph ben Noah, Sahal ben Maṣliḥ, Salmon ben Yeruḥim, David ben Boaz, Joseph ben Bakhtāwī, Tobias ben Moses, and some unknown figures, such as "Sfaradi" and "baal Abu'am." He obviously borrowed some of the citations of these authors from Yefet ben 'Eli, not being familiar with the original sources. Among his rabbinic sources he used the writings of Sa'adya Gaon, Judah ben Koresh, Moses ben Naftali, Menahem ben Saruk, and also *Tanḥuma*, *Bereshit Rabbah*, *Mekhilta*, and *Sifrei*.

In Jacob ben Reuben's awkward Hebrew, the influence of the language of Byzantine translators can be discerned. He added to his lexicon, like Hadassi, a number of new words which he coined. He also used Rabbinic language, calling it either the language of *Rishonim* (ראשונים), Rabbanites, Sages, ba'alei Talmud, or Talmud. There were no assaults or words of contemptuousness toward Rabbanites, but he called them "going astray" (טועים).

Jacob ben Reuben did not deal with philosophical aspects of faith and exegesis. The contribution of his compiled book (such as of most of Byzantine Karaite books until the thirteenth century) to Karaite thought, halakhah, or exegesis was quite limited. However, this did not prevent the Karaites of Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire, and Eastern Europe from copying and studying his book.

Only one Byzantine Karaite in the thirteenth century wrote treatises which survived: Aaron ben Joseph the Physician (Ha-Rofe', known as Aaron the Elder, ca. 1250–ca. 1320). He was born or possibly lived some time in Sulkhāt in the Crimean Peninsula, but was active mainly in Constantinople. His Hebrew is somewhat laconic and not always lucid, but he was meticulous in his use of grammar. Like Judah Hadassi and Jacob ben Reuben before him, Aaron created new words, including grammatical terminology. Most significantly, his use of the Hebrew language, his methods of interpretation, and his thought were greatly influenced by Rabbanite authors, demonstrating that late thirteenth-century Byzantine Karaites had absorbed new trends in exegesis, philosophy, and halakhah, as a result of contact with Rabbanite sources.

Aaron used Rabbanite sources rather freely, agreeing with Nissi ben Noah that most of the sayings of the Rabbis “were words of our fathers.”³⁸ Thus, he was one of the few Karaite authors to make ample use of Targum Onkelos. One can find in his books references to, or usage of, *Seder ‘Olam*, passages from the Mishnah, the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, Abraham ibn Ezra, Judah Ḥayyuj, Joseph Kimhi, Maimonides, RaSHI, Sa’adya Gaon, and others. According to Karaite lore, he was a student of Nahmanides, but that does not seem to be even a remote possibility.³⁹

Aaron ben Joseph’s reputation rests mainly on his exegetical book *Sefer ha-Mivḥar* (The Choice Book).⁴⁰ He also wrote a grammatical treatise *Kelil Yofi* (Perfect in Beauty),⁴¹ which was completely based on Sephardic grammatical scholarship, as well as a large number of liturgical poems (more than eighty poems are identified as his). Aaron established the rite of Karaite prayer and of the prayer-book (*Siddur*)⁴² which was adopted by most of the Karaite communities.

Despite Rabbanite influence, Aaron ben Joseph repeatedly took issue with Rabbanite interpretations of the Scripture on matters of halakhah; he substantiated his views by citing Karaite authors, such as Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, Yeshu’a ben Judah, Sahl ben Maṣliḥ, and Yefet ben ‘Eli. Aaron was not a great legalist and did not introduce significant innovations to Karaite halakhah, though he elucidated the reasons of some commandments of the Torah, such as sacrifices, the red heifer, ritual fringes, and others.

Aaron was much more receptive to Rabbanite philosophy. Unlike Judah Hadassi, whose theology was informed by the arguments of the

³⁸ *Sefer ha-Mivḥar*, p. 9a; Ankori, *Karaites*, 241. On Nissi, see Pinsker, *Lickutei Kadmoniot*, 1, 37; 2: 1–13; L. Nemoy, “Nissi ben Noah’s Quasi-Commentary on the Decalogue,” *JQR* 73 (April 1983): 307–48.

³⁹ See D. Frank, “Ibn Ezra and the Karaite Exegetes, Aaron ben Joseph and Aaron ben Elijah,” in *Abraham Ibn Ezra and His Age*, ed., F. Esteban (Madrid, 1990), 99–107.

⁴⁰ The commentaries on the Torah were published as *Sefer Ha-Mivḥar*, Gözleve (Eupatoria), 1834–1835 (with the supercommentary of Joseph Solomon Lutski, *Tirat ha-Kesef*) and *Mivḥar Yesharim*, Eupatoria 1836), 1834–1835 (Aaron’s commentary extends to Isaiah 59 and to part of Psalms; other sections were added by Abraham Firkovich).

⁴¹ Aaron ben Joseph did not finish this treatise. It was completed by Isaac Tishbi, a Karaite scholar from Constantinople, who also published it there in 1601 (see J. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, II, p. 1424). Another edition was published in Eupatoria in 1847.

⁴² D. Frank, “Karaite Prayer and Liturgy,” in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, ed., M. Polliack (Leiden, 2003), 566–7.

Kalām, Aaron ben Joseph followed Maimonidean Aristotelianism in many of his philosophical doctrines. Aaron ben Joseph accepted much of the Maimonidean criticism of geonic and Karaite *Kalām*, and he incorporated Maimonides's ideas in his exegesis.⁴³ This new tendency had a great impact on subsequent Karaite tradition. The impact of his exegesis can be seen as well in the seven supercommentaries which were written on *Sefer ha-Mivḥar* during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries in Constantinople, Lithuania, and the Crimea.

The next prominent Byzantine Karaite was Aaron ben Elijah of Nicodemia (Aaron the Younger, d. 1369), about whom we have little biographical information. For instance, it is known that his father Elijah was a passenger on a ship at sea during wartime, and at first was thought captive or dead. When Elijah returned home, his son Aaron composed a poem in honor of his return.⁴⁴ Aaron also mentioned that his father-in-law, Rabbi Moses, was his teacher.⁴⁵ We have two brief mentions of Aaron's disciples, one of whom was his cousin, who lived in Adrianople. This cousin copied Aaron's legal treatise *Gan 'Eden* twice. The first copy was completed on the fifth of Shevat, 1379, and the second completed on the fifteenth of Shevat, 1409, for somebody named Shabbetai ben Michael.⁴⁶

Aaron ben Elijah was the author of three books: a philosophical treatise *'Eṣ Ḥayyim* (The Tree of Life, 1346); a code of Karaite law, *Sefer Gan 'Eden* (The Garden of Eden, 1354), and a commentary on the Pentateuch, *Sefer Keter Torah* (The Crown of the Torah, 1362).⁴⁷ There are four liturgical poems, composed by Aaron ben Elijah in Karaite prayer-books, and more than twenty in different manuscripts.

Aaron's sources were diverse. In addition to Karaite classical compositions, cited by previous Karaite authors, he also used a great number of rabbinic sources such as the Mishna, the Talmud, and *Seder 'Olam*. Among medieval Rabbanite authorities, Aaron cited Abraham

⁴³ See Lasker, *From Judah Hadassi*, 60–8.

⁴⁴ The poem was printed as poem number 9 in the unpaginated introduction to *Keter Torah*.

⁴⁵ *'Eṣ Ḥayyim*, the end of ch. 63 and ch. 65.

⁴⁶ Mss. Parma—Biblioteca Palatina Cod. Parm. 3031; Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew MSS mic. 13846

⁴⁷ *'Eṣ Ḥayyim* was published twice: ed. F. Delitsch (Leipzig, 1841) and in Eupatoria 1847 (with commentary of Simhah Isaak Lutski, *Sefer Keter Torah* (Eupatoria, 1866) (rep. in Israel in 1972). *Sefer Gan 'Eden*, Eupatoria 1864 (rep. in Israel in 1972). M. Charner, "The Tree of Life by Aaron ben Elijah of Nicomedia," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1949).

ibn Ezra, RaSHI, Maimonides, Judah Hayyuj, David Kimhi, Samuel ibn Tibbon, Judah Halevi, Sa'adya Gaon, Yonah ibn Janah, Judah ha-Cohen of Toledo, Nahmanides, Shemarya Ikriti, and others. It is unclear if Aaron read earlier Karaite literature in the original Arabic and whether his knowledge of earlier Byzantine Karaite authors came from the original compositions and not merely from quotations by other authors. We have definite answers only concerning part of these sources.

In contrast with earlier Byzantine authors and translators, but similar to Aaron ben Joseph, Aaron ben Elijah's Hebrew style is close to that of Sephardic Jews as seen in the translations of the Ibn Tibbon family. Nevertheless, like many of his predecessors, Aaron used a number of words and expressions which were peculiar to Karaite Hebrew. Since he was familiar with Rabbinic writings, he made ample use of idioms and different expressions of the Sages.

Aaron ben Elijah's philosophy represents an attempt to achieve a synthesis between traditional Karaite theology of the Islamic *Kalām* and the Aristotelianism of Maimonides, trying to maintain loyalty to *Kalām*, while under the strong influence of Maimonides. His book *'Eṣ Ḥayyim* resembles *The Guide to the Perplexed* by Maimonides in many aspects.⁴⁸

Aaron ben Elijah's halakhic decisions are outlined mainly in his *Gan Eden*. For instance, according to him, circumcision delays the Sabbath. Also mortal danger (סכנת נפש) delays the Sabbath and Festivals, except for the cases when mortal danger is uncertain. In the case that a danger is uncertain, any healing is forbidden. He forbade going for a walk and visiting markets on the Sabbath. Aaron ben Elijah cautioned his co-religionists not to celebrate Hanukka; he abolished the levirate marriage in the Diaspora as well as the law about the inheritance of a daughter, which was permitted by Yūsuf al-Baṣīr.

V. KARAITE SCHOLARSHIP AT THE AGE OF TRANSITIONS

The fifteenth century was a period of dramatic political and cultural changes for the Byzantine Karaites. Starting with 1361 and until the

⁴⁸ See Lasker, *From Judah Hadassi*, 69–95; Frank, "The Religious Philosophy of the Karaite Aaron ben Elijah: The Problem of Divine Justice," (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1991).

conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottomans, the most important Karaite cultural center was located in Adrianople, the previous capital of the Ottoman Sultanate. Two years after the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans, all the Jews of the new state were ordered by the decree of Sultan Mehmed II to move from provincial cities to Constantinople. This decree of transfer (*sürgün*)⁴⁹ of big masses of population (not only Jews) forbade them from leaving the capital without permission of the authorities. Soon Constantinople became the largest and the most important Karaite center for all the Karaite communities.

By the end of the fifteenth century, thousands of Sephardic Jews from the Iberian Peninsula immigrated to the Ottoman Empire⁵⁰ and some of them settled in Constantinople. They brought with them different branches of knowledge, such as Kabbalah, astronomy, mathematics, Arabic and Greek philosophy, and numerous literary compositions on various subjects and genres. Their concept of Jewish education, which was formed under the influence of the European Renaissance, differed from that of local Romaniotes and Karaites. The culture of the new immigrants had a great impact on the local communities, Rabbanite and Karaite alike. This period is characterized by noticeable rapprochement between Karaites and Rabbanites, when some Rabbanite scholars taught their Karaite disciples Talmud, Kabbalah, Rabbanite exegesis, philosophy, and secular sciences.

Adrianople was the original home city of a notable Karaite family, the Bashyachi dynasty, famous for their reform tendencies in Karaite halakhah, which brought it closer to rabbinic halakhah. The prominent Karaite scholar, Elijah ben Moses Bashyachi (ca. 1420–1490), called the “Final Decisor” of Karaites, moved with his family from Adrianople to Constantinople in 1455, which he called “the city of our exile,” and in 1480 became a leader of the Karaite community.⁵¹

⁴⁹ J. Hacker, “The “Sürgün” System and Jewish Society in the Ottoman Empire during the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries” *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry* (1992): 1–65.

⁵⁰ The first wave of immigrants came to Byzantium from Spain as a result of forcible conversions of Jews to Christianity in 1391.

⁵¹ About Bashyachi see: Mann, *Studies* 2, 298–299; cf. also the index; Z. Ankori, “Beit Bashyatchi ve-Taqanotav,” introduction to Bashyatchi, *Adderet Eliyyahu*, unpaginated (Hebrew); *idem*, “Elijah Bashyachi: An Inquiry into His Traditions Concerning the Beginnings of Karaism in Byzantium,” *Tarbiz* 25 (1956/57): 44–65, 183–201 (Hebrew).

He studied under the famous Rabbanite scholar Mordecai Comtino (1402–1482).⁵²

Obviously, the atmosphere of rapprochement, intellectual contacts, and friendly relationships between Karaites and Rabbanites enabled some liberalization of Karaite halakhah. Elijah Bashyachi continued his family's tradition of reforms, and he sanctioned a number of innovations, which he expounded systematically in his book, *Adderet Eliyahu* (The Cloak of Elijah),⁵³ a kind of Karaite *Shulhan Arukh*, which serves Karaite believers until today. Some of these innovations were already suggested by his grandfather and his father. For instance, his grandfather Menachem and his father Moses, leaders of the Adrianople Karaites, had sanctioned the use of Sabbath lamps kindled before sunset, as was the Rabbanite practice, rather than the original Karaite procedure of sitting in darkness for the entire day. They originally were supported only by a small group of community members. Elijah Bashyachi defended this innovation in his code of law. In the course of time, this innovation was accepted in Karaite communities of the Ottoman Empire, Eastern Europe, and the Crimea, which had originally objected to it, but it was rejected by the communities of Land of Israel, Egypt, and Syria.

Bashyachi also established a new calendation system. Hitherto there had always been disagreements in the Karaite communities about determining the first day of the month which was set by direct lunar observation of the new crescent, in contrast to the Rabbanites, who employed a fixed, calculated calendar.⁵⁴ In addition, Karaites decided whether a leap month was necessary to be added in the spring on the basis of the appearance of the new barley crop (the *aviv*) in the Land of Israel; if the *aviv* were visible in Adar, no extra month was necessary. With the wide diffusion of Karaism in the Diaspora, timely reports about *aviv* sightings in the Land of Israel became unrealistic. Already in the eleventh century, Tobias ben Moses had introduced the rule of estimation (*hakravah*) for Byzantine communities, permitting their leaders to use Rabbanite information about determining certain

⁵² See J.-C. Attias, *Le commentaire biblique: Mordekhai Komtino ou l'herméneutique du dialogue* (Paris, 1991).

⁵³ The first edition was published in Constantinople in 1530; subsequent editions are Eypatoria, 1834, and Odessa, 1871 (reprinted in Israel, 1966).

⁵⁴ The origins of the calculated Rabbanite calendar are still unclear; see, e.g., S. Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, Second Century BCE–Tenth Century CE* (Oxford, 2001).

aspects of the calendar. Bashyachi, who was an expert in astronomy, introduced a combination of calendrical calculations with lunar observation, as suggested by calendrical tables. Thus, Karaites were able to plan their calendar in advance, just as the Rabbanites did, relying on the principle that when certainty was unavailable, estimation took its place. Another Bashyachi innovation was the beginning of a Karaite annual cycle of Torah readings in Tishrei, as was the Rabbanite custom, instead of Nisan, to which Karaites were previously accustomed.⁵⁵

The legal code of Elijah Bashyachi, *Adderet Eliyahu*, also contains a number of theological discussions, especially in connection with the ten principles of faith, similar to but not identical with those of Judah Hadassi.⁵⁶ The structure of his book has some resemblance to Maimonides's great legal code, the *Mishneh Torah*, and despite his loyalty to previous Karaite traditions, both theological and legal, Bashyachi is, in many ways, a Maimonidean. Thus, he states with previous Karaite tradition that all laws must be derived from the written text of the Scripture (*min ha-katuv*), from analogy (*heqqesh*), and from tradition, called by Karaites, "the yoke of inheritance" (*sevel ha-yerushah*), but he argues that Maimonides also used logical analogy in his legal rulings. Furthermore, Bashyachi adopted many concepts of Maimonidean thought. For instance, his proof for God's existence is not based on creation (such as in Karaite *kalam*), but rather on Maimonidean Aristotelian arguments.⁵⁷ He considered the Torah to be a philosophical book which could be fully understood only by a previous study of Aristotelian and other books in the realm of logic, mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and optics (a list of which he provided). For those incapable of the full curriculum, Bashyachi recommended Al-Ghazali's *Intentions of the Philosophers*, which summarized the Muslim Avicenna's Aristotelianism, by Aaron ben Elijah's *Eṣ Hayyim*. Bashyachi stated that this preparation would provide the intellectual elite with the ability to distinguish between literal and allegorical meanings of verses (leaving the masses with an imperfect understanding of Scriptures).⁵⁸ One of Bashyachi's principles of faith is the belief in the coming of the

⁵⁵ On Bashyachi's reforms, see Z. Ankori, "Beit Bashyachi ve-Taqanotav," an introduction to the Israel, 1966, edition of *Adderet Eliyahu*, unpaginated; the change in the lectionary cycle is defended by Caleb Afendolopo, *Patshegen Ketav ha-Dat*, ed. J. Al-Gamil, et al. (Ramle, 1977).

⁵⁶ For Bashyachi's philosophical views, see Lasker, *From Judah Hadassi*, 96–122.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 100–4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 106–8.

Messiah, a discussion of which is modeled after that of Maimonides. The Messiah will be a king from the dynasty of David, who will bring about the end of the exile, replacing it with Jewish political independence in the Land of Israel and the reconstruction of the Temple.⁵⁹ Although Bashyachi's work contains a number of philosophical ideas, he did not always express them explicitly, perhaps following Maimonides's injunctions concerning revealing secrets to the masses. Some later writers perceived his theological views as too rationalistic and criticized him for this reason.⁶⁰

Bashyachi's younger contemporary, Caleb Afendopolo (ca. 1465–1525?), was a prominent Karaite scholar, as well as his brother-in-law (he was married to Bashyachi's sister). He was apparently born in Adrianople, relocated to the village Keramiya, where he wrote most of his books, and then spent his last years in Akkerman (Belgoród-Dnestrovsky, Ukraine). He also studied under Bashyachi's Rabbanite teacher, Mordecai Comtino, and corresponded with another Rabbanite scholar Moses Kapuzato, a great adherent of Maimonides. Afendopolo supported all the innovations of Bashyachi and represented a new generation of Karaite intellectuals, which did not have to justify their adherence to the ideas of the time. He belonged to the world of post-Maimonidean Aristotelianism and also studied Averroes's writings in Hebrew translation.

Afendopolo was a prolific author, well-educated in various spheres of knowledge, and wrote a number of legal treatises: *Patshegen Ketav ha-Dat*, concerning different aspects of the weekly Torah reading; a number of epistles on different subjects: four on ritual slaughter, one on the wine of libation; one on the laws of incest. He composed indexes for two books: *Nahal Eshkol* on *Eshkol ha-Kofer* by Hadassi and *Derekh 'Eš Ḥayyim* on *'Eš Ḥayyim* by Aaron ben Elijah. Afendopolo also completed Elijah Bashyachi's *Adderet Elijahu* after the author's death. He wrote the astronomical treatises *Mikhlol Yofi* and *Gal Einai* as well as a commentary on the book by Nichomachus of Gerasa (planned commentaries on Ptolemy's *Almagest* and Euclid's *Book of the Elements* were not carried out). His treatise *Gan Melekh* is an eclectic book, which contains riddles, issues of ethics, customs, and so forth; *Avi Ner ben Ner* is a poetical treatise. He was also an author of about

⁵⁹ Ibid., 119.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 120–1.

fifty liturgical poems. In his philosophical book *Asarah Ma'amarot* (Ten Chapters), Afendopolo deals with issues such as the existence of God, divine providence, creation, and the like. He was influenced both by Aaron ben Elijah's *'Eṣ Ḥayyim*, as well as by Aristotelian Maimonideanism and Joseph Albo's *Book of Principles*. Thus, he continued the moderate rationalism of his brother-in-law Bashyachi.⁶¹

Elijah Bashyachi, Caleb Afendopolo, and their younger contemporary Judah Gibbor, another moderate Maimonidean, were the last representatives of Byzantine Karaite scholarship. They were educated in traditional Karaite concepts, but found themselves in a new cultural reality. They strengthened the tendencies of Karaite spiritual life which were especially important in their period: the liberalization of halakhah, the development of thought in accordance with the new ideas of the Jewish intellectual world, and the acceptance of a wider spectrum of knowledge than had previously been common among Karaites. They took upon themselves responsibility for the transmission of the traditional Karaite legacy in the Ottoman Empire, the Crimea, and Eastern Europe.

VI. THE HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF BYZANTINE KARAITES AND THEIR POLEMICS AGAINST RABBANITES

What was the self-perception of Byzantine Karaites and how did they define their place among numerous rabbinic communities and their role in Jewish history? There are no direct indications to these issues in the sources. We can partially answer these questions through evidence of the rabbinic perception of Karaism and Karaites and the reaction of Karaites to their definitions. For this purpose Karaite historiographical literature, which reflects the tendencies of historical thought and national or religious self-identification, could be very helpful. Regrettably, Karaite Byzantine literature does not abound in historiographical compositions. Therefore, we have no choice but to search for passages concerning any historical views or events, self-identification and the attitude to these issues, scattered in exegetical, legal, or philosophical literature.

⁶¹ See D. Lasker, "Byzantine Karaite Thought, 12th–16th Centuries," in *Karaite Judaism*, ed., Polliack, 505–28.

The preceding Arabic-writing Karaite scholars, who created a vast corpus of literature, bequeathed to the generations to come a very poor historiographical heritage. The above-mentioned treatise of Ya'qub al-Qirqisānī, *Kitab 'al-Anwar wal-Maraqib*, contains "Survey of Jewish Sects," concerning various sects of Judaism, including Christianity, their beliefs, and differences between them. This survey is a kind of historiography; it is a heresyography, which deals mainly with the schism between Karaites and Rabbanites, and its primary purpose, which was not explicitly put by Qirqisānī, is actually both apology and polemics. In spite of the availability of extensive and valuable historical data, there is no attempt at a critical approach or special interest regarding history in his book. The next generations of Karaite authors made ample use of his book. One of them was Judah Hadassi. His encyclopedia *Eshkol ha-Koffer* contains a large number of historical sources,⁶² such as Qirqisānī, Josippon, Eldad ha-Dani, and so on. The very use of these sources could be interpreted as an interest in history, but the analysis of *Eshkol ha-Koffer* does not indicate such a goal.

Hadassi deals with biblical chronology and provides the chronology of the Patriarchs and the reckoning of the years the people of Israel spent in Egypt. He discusses the development of the tradition starting with the period of Moses. Hadassi also depicts the "historical events" that will occur, in his opinion, in messianic times, for example: "The kings of South [and North] will come to destroy the prayer house of Mehmet and the entombment of Jesus."⁶³

Dealing with chronology, the order of generations (*toldot*), the history of the transmission of Jewish tradition ("the chain of tradition"),⁶⁴ and the depiction of future Messianic events as an apotheosis of

⁶² On the historical consciousness of the Karaites and Hadassi among them see: F. Astren, "Karaite Historiography and Historical Consciousness," in *Karaite Judaism*, ed., Polliack, 28–30.

⁶³ See Caleb Afendopolo, *Nahal Eshkol*, MS Adler 14, fol. 38b-40a, "כי יעלו מלכי" ונגב [ומלכי הצפון] להרוס בית תפלות מחמט וקבר ישו See Z. Ankory, "Studies in the Messianic Doctrine of Yehuda Hadassi the Karaite," *Tarbitz* 30 (1961): 206 (Hebrew).

⁶⁴ It is usually called in Rabbanite literature (*Shalshet ha-Kabbalah*) and by Karaites—transmission (*Ha'ataqah*) or transmitted tradition (*Ha'ataqah Mishtalshelet*), the purpose of which is to demonstrate that the transmission of Torah from its reception on Mount Sinai until modern times was successive and documented at every stage. The classic example of a documented chain of tradition in rabbinic literature is Mishah, Abot 1:1, "Moses received the Torah on Sinai and handed it down to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets and the prophets handed it down to the Men of the Great Assembly"

history, are typical attributes of medieval Jewish historiography prior to the expulsion from Spain.⁶⁵

In his vast compendium, Hadassi does not write history and he does not display any interest in it in his book. F. Astren stressed that Hadassi avoided commenting on post-Biblical history.⁶⁶ Possibly he did not avoid it consciously, but the very concept of history as a separate discipline was not a part of his world view, as it was not intrinsic to his forerunners, both Karaite and Rabbanite.

Byzantine Rabbanites, whose roots in this country could be traced up to ancient times, characterized Karaites as strangers who came from Muslim lands, studied from Muslims, and introduced innovations in halakhah. The Rabbanite Byzantine scholar of the eleventh century, Rabbi Tobias ben Eliezer from Kastoria (Bulgaria), who moved to Thessalonica, attacked Karaites in his book, *Midrash Lekah Tov* and called them⁶⁷ “the fools, who have come and introduced new doctrines.”⁶⁸ He also claimed: “These people deeply corrupted [the true Jewish mode of life] being the disciples of Ishmaelites and acting under the weight of a mad spirit which assaulted their brains!”⁶⁹

Tobias ben Eliezer emphasizes here and elsewhere an important aspect, which served as a background for all the disputes and the feuds about halakhah between Karaites and Rabbanites. He accentuates that Rabbanites received and carried on the tradition of their fathers, in contrast to Karaites, who invented traditions in an arbitrary way and transmitted it to others:

Woe to those who do violence to themselves and utter arrogance against Him...they dare change laws and break the Eternal Covenant! Why, our ancestors were present when the Temple was founded in the time of last Prophets...and saw the exact procedure of burnt offerings and meal offerings...and the way that procedure was transmitted to them from the hands of Prophets, so they wrote it down in the teaching as a testimony in Israel. It was only afterwards that a brood of sinful men arose, men who did not know between right and left... They did not rely

⁶⁵ See about the historiographical genre “The Chain of Tradition”: Y. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Philadelphia, 1982), 27–53.

⁶⁶ Astren, *ibid.*, 29.

⁶⁷ His commentary on the Pentateuch and the Five Scrolls, based on the *midrashim* from the Talmud, Mekhilta, Sifra, Sifrei, etc.

⁶⁸ Tobias ben Eliezer, *Lekah Tov* on Leviticus, A. Padwa, ed., (Vilna, 1880), 69 [35a]: והשוטים אשר באו וחדשו דתות מקרוב באו.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 38 f., [19b f.]: ... העמיקו שחטו מלימוד הישמעאלים ממשקל רוח תזזית. שעה לא מקדודם ולא סמכו על דברי רבותינו.

on the pronouncements of our fathers with regard to what is permitted and what is prohibited, but they wrote down whatever came to their mind and transmitted it [to others].⁷⁰

The debates between Karaites and Rabbanites concerning whose chain of tradition was authentic and unbroken was one of the main issues in their controversy from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century.

The fact that Hadassi incorporated Qirqisānī's fragment on the heretic sects was obviously not haphazard. Byzantine Karaites were defined by Rabbanites as heretics, and there was always a possibility of excommunication, therefore they tried to dissociate themselves from heretic sects. There still existed in Byzantium the Jewish sect of Meshawites,⁷¹ which was described by Qirqisānī. Karaites, as well as Rabbanites, regarded the Meshawites as heretics and polemicized not only against Rabbanites, but also against Meshawites. This sect, which arrived in Byzantium during the Jewish immigration from Muslim countries, settled mainly on Cyprus. They were followers of Mishawayh or Meswi from 'Ukbara (near Bagdad), who lived in the ninth century. They used a solar calendar.⁷² He and his followers, unlike Rabbanites and Karaites, reckoned the day from sunrise to sunrise, and in addition to it they transgressed the Sabbath commandments by observing it on Sunday; their *Yom Kippur* always fell on Sabbath, and *Pesah* on Thursday. In Sharf's opinion, the observance of Sabbath on Sunday was a result of a Christianizing tendency.⁷³ This sect, excommunicated by Rabbanites and Karaites alike, gradually assimilated into the Christian population, but we have no documented information when the sect ceased to exist.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ibid., 38 f., [19b f.]: אוי להם לחומסי נפשם ומדברי על יסוד עולם עתק ויתגאו בעצמם להחליף חוקים ולהפר ברית עולם. ואבותינו היו בזמן בית המקדש אשר הוסד בימי נביאים אחרונים... וראו היאך היתה תקון עולה והמנחה... וכאשר קיבלו מידי הנביאים כן כתבו במשנתם לעד ישראל. ואחרי כן קמו תרבות אנשים חטאים שלא ידעו בין ימינם לשמאלם אלא חכמים המה להרע ולהטיב לא ידעו... ולא סמכו על דברי רבותינו לאסור ולהתיר אלא מה שעלה בדעתם כתבו ומסרו...

⁷¹ Ankori, *Karaites*, 372 ff.; A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London 1971), 150–1.

⁷² Qirqisānī wrote about Meshawites in his above-mentioned "Survey of Jewish Sects," see: *ibid.*, 104, 150–1.

⁷³ Sharf, *ibid.*, 150.

⁷⁴ There is an important piece of evidence on their settlement in Cyprus delivered by Benjamin of Tudela in the second half of the twelfth century: "There are also some heretical Jews called Epikursin [= heretics], whom the Israelites have excommunicated in all places. They prophane the eve of Sabbath, and observe the first night of the week,

As the book *Ozar Nehmad* (The Delightful Treasure) by Tobias ben Moses implies, the author initiated fierce anti-Mishawite propaganda, based on a number of accusations, mainly on the transgression of halakhah: calendar issues, thanks offerings, some specific matters of *kashrut*. He wrote:

At no time has there arisen in Israel a man who would argue that the Days—the Days of Creation as well as the Days of Sacrifices were all from morning to morning, and that no days were from evening to evening. The only exception was that Second Jeroboam, that man of a stammering tongue, the accursed one [= Mishawayh]. Now I have compared him to Jeroboam... because he had sinned and caused others to commit sin through evil intention, just as Jeroboam did when he led Israel astray.⁷⁵

The image of Jeroboam, the king of Israel after the division into two kingdoms, became in Karaite tradition an embodiment of all the heresies which developed and existed in Israel over time, including that of Rabbanite teaching.

In addition, Tobias ben Moses accuses the Meshawites of a Christian orientation: “I shall refute the words of him of a stammering tongue, the accursed one, and all his priests shall bewail him..., ever since they have defiled themselves with the uncircumcised.”⁷⁶

These and other similar accusations were also produced by Rabbanite scholars about Mishawites, and in this context Karaites expressed a common standpoint of all the nation of Israel. Rabbinic literature, however, contains cases of intermingling between Karaites and Meshawites while accusing both groups of heresy. Such accusations are found in the writings of Sa'adya Gaon (882–942), who polemicized with Karaites. Saadyah writes: “There were some in the [Jewish] nation [partaking of] fats in our time... Now, I do not know, whether or not there is any difference between those who oppose our teaching [= the Karaites] and these [other] dissenters.”⁷⁷

which is termination of the Sabbath.” *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudelah*, M. Adler, ed. (New York, 1964), 14–5.

⁷⁵ See fragment of *Ozar Nehmad* by Tobias ben Moses in: S. Poznanski, “Meshwi al-Okbari, chef secte juive,” *REJ* XXXIV (1897): 184. איש לא קם ביש[ראל] לעו[לם] איש... כי הימים הם מבקר עד בקר יחד ימי הבריאה וימי הקרבנות. ואין שם ימים מערב עד ערב. זולת ירבעם הב' גלעג לשון הארור. ולא דימיתי אותו כירבעם... איש גדול. Quoted by Ankory, *Karaites*, 395, n. 107.

⁷⁶ Poznanski, *ibid.*, 184.

⁷⁷ Poznanski, *ibid.*, 164, n. 6.

Such statements aroused indignation and protest among Karaite scholars. Tobias ben Moses refuted the words of his opponent, who died about 200 years earlier:

Know ye, my brethren that this frivolous Pithomite [Sa'adya of Fayyum] was referring to the pronouncements of Mishawayh al-Ukbari and of those who had followed the latter in permitting fats of non-offerable animals.⁷⁸ ... He and the members of his Academic circle that are eligible for comparison with Mishawayh al-Ukbari, for they have erred and misled others much the same as he [= Mishawayh] had erred and caused others to err.⁷⁹

Tobias ben Eliezer also intermingled Karaites with Meshawites. The Karaite authors who lived after Tobias ben Moses, such as Hadassi, Jacob ben Reuben, Aharon ben Joseph, and Aharon ben Elija also expressed anti-Meshawite critique, as if it was one of the most important problems in their days. Nevertheless, in Ankory's opinion this critique was more a tool to demonstrate dissociation from heresy, and thus to indemnify their community from Rabbanite attacks, than the historical actuality.⁸⁰

Rabbanite polemics against Karaism, which included accusations of introducing innovations to the tradition, were used as a catalyst for the development of Karaite historiography. As a reaction to these polemics, Karaite authors tried to demonstrate the continuity and authenticity of their tradition (contrary to that of Rabbanites) by means of historical arguments. However these arguments were mostly of an a-historical nature. The most important Byzantine Karaite historiographical treatise which used such kind of arguments was *The Schism between Karaites and Rabbanites* (Hilluk ha-Karaim ve-ha-Rabbanim), written by the scholar Elijah ben Abraham.⁸¹ We have no information concerning his biography, besides for his authorship of this book.⁸² Based on his treatise, one can conclude that Elijah ben Abraham lived

⁷⁸ Bodl. MS no. 290, 99b, published by Ankory, *ibid.*, 390. דעו אחי כי זה הפיתומי [Sa'adya of Fayyum] was referring to the pronouncements of Mishawayh al-Ukbari and of those who had followed the latter in permitting fats of non-offerable animals.⁷⁸ ... הלץ זכר דברי מישוי אלעכברי ואשר הלכו בהתרת חלבי חלים.

⁷⁹ Bodl. MS no. 290, 100a; Ankori, *ibid.*, 391.

⁸⁰ Ankori, *ibid.*, 372.

⁸¹ The only publication of this text was by S. Pinsker, *Lickute Kadmoniot, Zur Geschichte—des Karaismus und der karäischen Literatur*, 97–106. There are about 10 manuscripts of its complete and incomplete text at our disposal. A critical edition of this treatise would be a desired project.

⁸² Abbreviations of his name are found in his poem at the beginning of his treatise.

in the late eleventh to early twelfth century.⁸³ This book, according to the author's doctrine, is the history of Rabbanite heresy and Karaite true belief; the distortion and the loss of the original tradition by Rabbanites and the maintenance of it by Karaites over the course of Jewish history.

Elijah ben Abraham was the first Karaite author who tried to introduce the history of the schism between Karaites and Rabbanites and devoted to this undertaking a separate treatise. Thus he became the founder of a new genre, developed by the next generations of Karaite authors, while his predecessors contented themselves with single passages or chapters on this subject-matter. Elijah ben Abraham aimed to expound the events concerning the issue in chronological order and to elucidate them, but his treatise was not a chronicle or a historical reconstruction. This book was an attempt at a new interpretation of Biblical history, and the exposition of a new Karaite doctrine created by the author.

Elijah ben Abraham introduced his version of history starting with the First Temple period until the times of Anan ben David. According to this version, the division of Israel into two kingdoms and the innovations introduced by the King Jeroboam ben Nebat caused the division into two currents—proto-Rabbanites and proto-Karaites.⁸⁴ The motif of Jeroboam's innovations which later gave birth to Rabbanism, Elijah borrowed from Qirqisānī.⁸⁵ The latter introduced the figure of Jeroboam as leading astray the sons of Israel and preventing them from visiting the Temple because of the fear of losing power.⁸⁶

Unlike Qirqisānī, whose purpose was to describe sects in order to demonstrate the consequences of the schism (caused by evil deeds of

⁸³ The date is not clear. Poznanski's opinion that Elijah wrote this treatise in the eleventh century is based on the following considerations: 1) Its contents and style; 2) Elijah wrote that at the beginning there were fourteen sects, and in his time only four remained: Rabbanites, Karaites, Tiflisites, and Meshawites (Pinsker mentions this argument too, see: Pinsker, *ibid.*, 97); 3) The latest authors Elijah mentions in his book are Tobias ben Moses, Yashar ben Hessed (or Sahal ben Fazal), who were still alive in the late eleventh century. He does not refer to Hadassi. 4) Eljah used the book of Sa'adya Gaon, polemical treatise against Anan, *Kitab 'al-Radd ala Anan (The Book of Refutation of Anan)*, where Sa'adya exposed the story of the schism between Karaites and Rabbanites and Anan's acquaintance with Abu Hanifa. This book of Sa'adya was lost in the twelfth century.

⁸⁴ See: Pinsker, *Hilluk*, 101.

⁸⁵ Qirqisānī, 95–102.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 95–96.

Jeroboam), and superiority of Karaism among other teachings, Elijah ben Abraham tried to demonstrate the relations between Karaites and Rabbanites in their historical perspective. He created a new narrative, which was based on the existing materials.

From that day [the division into two kingdoms] those who feared God's word from the ten tribes, having seen this corruption, separated themselves from their brethren in Israel and went beyond the rivers of Cush. And about them it says: 'We have a little sister' (Cant. 8:8).⁸⁷

Elijah possibly heard about the Khazar kingdom (which had already ceased to exist) and perhaps was inspired by the stories from the account of Eldad ha-Dani. Elijah endowed the ten tribes with a new historical role, having turned them into proto-Karaites separated from the corrupted nation and settled in some unknown place. He added that, "There were not any remnants from the feared God unless in the Holy City, and they stayed there because of their yearning for the Temple...and they were called "sigh and cry" and they were exiled with the remnants of the nation."⁸⁸

This image of the "sigh and cry," the guards of Jerusalem, was a prototype of Karaite Mourners of Zion. According to Elijah's narrative, the prophets Haggai, Zakhariah, Malakhiah, Joshua ben Yehosedek, Zerubabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah were properly associated with Karaism—"their religion is our religion, and their way is our way."⁸⁹ The leaders who returned from Babylon, according to Elijah were not corrupted and did not lead the majority astray, unlike those who caused the destruction of the Second Temple (= Rabbanites) by their bad deeds. The kings of Edom expelled them and the "sigh and cry" was forced to go into exile, having shared their destiny with the majority.

It should be pointed out that the image of Anan as the founder of Karaism,⁹⁰ which is found in Elijah's treatise, is different from that of previous Karaite sources. These sources usually imply that Anan and his adherents were quite distant from Karaism in most aspects. Karaism was formed three generations after Anan,⁹¹ and during this period

⁸⁷ Pinsker, *Ḥilluk*, 101.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁹¹ H. Ben-Shammai, "Between Ananites and Karaites: Observations on Early Medieval Jewish Sectarianism," in *Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations*, ed., R. Nettler, Vol. 1 (1993), 19–29.

Karaite authors criticized him for his views. For instance, Qirqisānī, who lived about 150 years later, called him “Chief of the Enlightened,”⁹² perceived him as a Rabbanite scholar.⁹³ The story about the appearance and rising of Anan, was borrowed by Elijah from Sa’adya Gaon’s anti-Karaite polemic treatise.⁹⁴ In spite of the fact that the greatest anti-Karaite polemicist used this story for his polemical purpose, and in spite of Elijah’s own critique of Anan’s errors,⁹⁵ he accepted this version as authentic. Together with it he changed the image of Anan, turning him into the first leader of Karaism, obviously due to the total lack of written history of the beginning of Karaism and its founding fathers.

Elijah built the chain of tradition, which differed from the Rabbanite one, and interlaced it into the chronological framework of given periods of history. He chose the “positive heroes” of Jewish history and unambiguously associated them with early Karaism, which followed the true way of Torah, whilst the Rabbanites figured in his treatise as the heirs of Jeroboam’s heresy, who were guilty of the destruction of both Temples.

Elijah’s assertion: “We are more ancient than them (= Rabbanites)”⁹⁶ implies the precedence of Karaism and its claim for monopoly on the possession of the truth. Elijah’s position also disencumbers Karaites from the burden of sins which the biblical tradition attributes to all of the people of Israel. The author’s emphasis of Karaite anteriority was especially important in the context of the Byzantine milieu, where the Rabbanites perceived them as strangers and as a later deviation from Judaism. According to Elijah, Karaites were a very small minority which maintained the original true tradition, but became a victim of Rabbanite sins and were forced to go with them into exile and to share their historical fate.

Elijah attached at the end of his treatise a list of Karaite scholars and leaders, which included Anan and eight of his descendants, and well-known Jerusalemites and other scholars. Among the latest Byzantine

⁹² Qirqisānī, 95.

⁹³ Ben-Shammai, *ibid.*, 21–2.

⁹⁴ As we mentioned above, Elijah used the polemical treatise of Sa’adyah Gaon against Anan, *Kitab ‘al-Radd ala Anan*. Sa’adyah introduced this story on purpose, in order to illustrate that contemporary Karaites did not know this version of Anan’s life.

⁹⁵ Pinsker, *ibid.*, 101.

⁹⁶ Pinsker, *ibid.*, “וראשונים אנחנו מהם”

scholars he mentioned only Tobias ben Moses. With this list Elijah filled the historical gap which had previously existed in Karaite literature. He thereby created the historical continuity of Karaism, which served as a Karaite chain of tradition and could be a response to Rabbanite polemical claims.

Elijah's new narrative went through many transformations during Karaite history. It became an important constituent of Karaite apology, and figured in many treatises on anti-rabbinic polemics. His theory also served the Karaite claim that the Torah, which was given at Mount Sinai, was a Karaite teaching, while Rabbanism appeared as a late deviation.

The intensive changes in Karaites' historical consciousness occurred in the sixteenth century. The main factors of this change was the development of rabbinic historiographical literature, a large part of which was written by authors who were exiled from the Iberian Peninsula or by their descendants. The impact of this literature aroused a need among Karaite scholars to redefine their own identity and their place in Jewish history. Thus, at the end of the sixteenth century there appeared a new genre of Karaite literature—the historiography, which to a large extent was a continuation of Elijah's approach. There were two main treatises by Karaite scholars—the introduction to the above-mentioned summary of Karaite belief *'Asarah Ma'amarot*⁹⁷ (and its fourth essay) by C. Afendopolo, and the book *Mateh 'Elohim* (The Rod of God)⁹⁸ by Moses Bashyachi (d. 1572), the great-grandson of Elijah Bashyachi. Their main tendency was to find proto-Karaites and proto-Rabbanites in the Second Temple period and also among the Talmud sages.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Caleb Afendopolo, *'Assarah Ma'amarot*, ed., J. Aglamil (Ramle, 2000).

⁹⁸ Moshe Bashyachi, *Mateh 'Elohim*, ed., J. Aglamil (Ramle, 2001).

⁹⁹ Neutral characters of Rabbinic literature, such as Shimon ben Shattah and Judah ben Tabbai, were transformed in accordance with the new Karaite version into the representatives of two different beliefs, impossible to bridge (the first regarded as the founder of Karaism and the second of Rabbanism). Thus, proto-Karaites spoke from the pages of the Talmud with the voices of Shammai or Rabbi Eliezer. Hereby rabbinic literature served as a tool of the proof and the substantiation of the "Karaitica veritas." The phenomenon of reinterpretation had its counterpart in the Christian polemics against Judaism, when the Old Testament was interpreted in a new way by *Patres Ecclesiae* in order to prove the Christian truth. In the thirteenth century Dominicans used the Talmud and Midrash literature for the same purpose, such as the book *Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeus* by Raymund Martini, written in 1278 (Raymundus Martini, *Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeus*, Lipsiae 1687; repr. 1967); in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries the literature of Kabbalah played the same

The Karaite authors of Eastern Europe until the twentieth century also based their historical writing on Elijah's narrative, having disregarded its mythological and a-historical character.¹⁰⁰ In addition, Elijah's concepts became a part of a Protestant narrative about Karaism as an authentic and an enlightened Judaism, which was not corrupted by Pharisees and Talmudists.

VII. THE INFLUENCE OF BYZANTINE SCHOLARSHIP ON THE CRIMEAN AND EASTERN-EUROPEAN KARAITES

Already in the first century B.C.E., Hellenistic Jews and Jewish converts settled in the Greek cities of the northern Black Sea shore, including the Crimean Peninsula, that were a part of the Kingdom of Pontus. Romans ruled the Crimea from 63 B.C.E., followed by the Byzantines. The Jewish community of Byzantine Chersones (today within the municipal area of Sevastopol) continued to exist, possibly with interruptions, until the eleventh century. By the second half of the thirteenth century, the coastal cities of the Crimea came under Italian cultural influence because some of them became Genoese colonies.¹⁰¹ Italian Jewish merchants who moored in the Crimean harbors brought in addition to their merchandise Jewish books, which introduced to the local Jewish communities ideas and tendencies of the spiritual life of Italian Jewry. At the same time, the connections between Crimean Jewish communities and those of the Byzantine Empire continued through the centuries and were not interrupted after the Ottoman conquest.

role in the interpretations by Pico della Mirandola, Johann Reuchlin, Guillaume Postel, and others.

¹⁰⁰ See, for instance, the words of the Karaite writer Mordekhai ben Nisan of Kuki-zow (Galicia) in his book *Levush Malkhut* (Royal Robes) from the beginning of the eighteenth century: "To everyone who wants to know, who are Karaites, and from which nation they are, we will say, that they are seed of Abraham, Isaak and Jacob, and particularly of the twelve tribes of Israel, which went down into Egypt, being seventy souls, and stayed there in exile, and the Lord-Blessed-Be-He led them out from there... and they arrived to Mount Sinai... and received the Torah." see: A. Neubauer, *Aus der Peterburger Bibliothek: Beiträge und Documente zur Geschichte des Karäerthums und der karaischen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1866), Hebrew section pp. 30-1.

¹⁰¹ This influence grew after 1260, when the Genoese purchased Kaffa (today Feodosia) from Tatarish Khan Oran-Timur. Kaffa became the main center of Genoese colonies on the Black Sea.

The first mention of Karaites in the Crimea is related to the community of Sulkhath,¹⁰² the old capital of Crimean-Tatar Khanate. We find it in *Sefer ha-Mivḥar* by Aaron ben Joseph. He wrote about the dispute held there between the local Karaites on calendation issues in 1278 against Rabbanites.¹⁰³ He was possibly born and lived in Sulkhath before his relocation to Constantinople, or may have been visiting this community. This is an important piece of evidence both of the existence of Sulkhath Karaite and Rabbanite communities, and of the influence of Byzantine Karaites' scholarship in this region.

An outstanding Rabbanite scholar, R. Abraham Qirimi, also lived in Sulkhath. Upon the request of his disciple, the Karaite Hizkijah ben Elhanan ha-Nasi, in 1358 Qirimi wrote in this city his important exegetical work, *Sefat Emet* (The Language of Truth),¹⁰⁴ the commentary on the Pentateuch.

There is no biographical data on Qirimi, besides for scanty notes, telling that he was forced to roam and underwent many vicissitudes in his life. His teacher was Shemaryah Ikriti of Negropont, born in Rome and relocated to Crete in his childhood together with his father.¹⁰⁵ Ikriti is the most quoted author in *Sefat Emet*. Qirimi also quoted Abraham ibn Ezra and polemicized in his book against Yisaak Albalag, philosopher, exegete, and Kabbalist, who lived in France in the second part of the thirteenth century. But the most important author for Qirimi was Maimonides, whom he regarded as "the only real sage." Qirimi was a radical rationalist. Sometimes he rejected certain commentaries of RaSHI, when the latter used *midrash* for his interpretations: "Don't pay attention to RaSHI's words, because they do not follow from the literal meaning [of the Scripture text]."¹⁰⁶ Qirimi almost did not use allegoric interpretation; he tried to explain some miracles, such as the Plagues of Egypt in a rationalistic way. He averred that the real love of God could only be through comprehension. As mentioned above, Qirimi taught Hizqiah, a Karaite disciple, in Sulkhath. Hizqiah was a son of the head of the local Karaite community (Elhanan ha-Nasi). It is reasonable to suppose that he had other disciples from this Karaite

¹⁰² Called Qırım ("entrenchment" in Mongolian), or Eski Qırım in Turkic; in Russian Saryj Krym (Old Crimea). It gave its name to the entire Peninsula.

¹⁰³ Aaron ben Joseph, *Sefer ha-Mivḥar* (on Exodus) (Evpatoria, 1835), 14b.

¹⁰⁴ Abraham Qirimi, *Sefat 'Emet*, Russian National Library, St.-Petersburg, Evr I, 50.

¹⁰⁵ See about him: S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium 1204-1453* (Tuscaloosa, 1985), 131 ff., and index.

¹⁰⁶ Qirimi, f. 78b.

community, who studied with him the writings of Iqrity, Maimonides, ibn Ezra, and Albalag. Crimean Karaite scholars were also familiar with *Sefat Emet* and it was also copied by Karaites for generations. It was kept and copied also by the Crimean Rabbanite community.

The city of Mangup in the mountainous part of the Crimea was a Christian principality (Theodoro) until the Ottoman invasion, when it was turned into part of the Ottoman territory in 1475.¹⁰⁷ Most of its population consisted of Crimean Goths, with Rabbanite and Karaite communities. This Greek-speaking Christian principality was in a sphere of Byzantine cultural influence. Apparently the early Karaite settlers of Mangup were of Byzantine origin. This community, which underwent Turkization from the late sixteenth century onwards, existed until the Russian occupation in 1792. We have only epigraphic evidence about the beginning of this community.¹⁰⁸ These epitaphs testify to the existence of the Karaite community in Mangup in a short period of the golden age of the Mangup principality, which began in the twenties of the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁹ Since this community was in a Christian principality, it probably had contacts with Byzantium. Unfortunately, we only have documented evidence about such contacts from the Ottoman period. After the transfer of large masses of the Byzantine population to Constantinople in 1455, a part of the Karaite population immigrated to the Crimea, Mangup, and Chufut-Qal'eh.¹¹⁰ In the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries Greek names are still found in the cemetery of Chufut-Qal'eh.

Byzantine influence on the education of the Crimean Karaites can be gauged from the books which were copied in Mangup. For instance, the Karaite scholar, teacher of Torah, and copyist from Man-

¹⁰⁷ Mangup was turned by the Ottomans into *vilayet*—the largest administrative unit, with the capital in Kaffa; most of the territory of the Crimean Peninsula became a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire—the Khanate of Crimea.

¹⁰⁸ The most ancient epitaphs belong to 1444 and 1455, but they only have biblical names of the deceased on them, without any additional information. A tomb inscription from 1456 is dedicated to a woman with a Greek name—Efrasini bath Joseph.

¹⁰⁹ In this period the prince of Theodoro, Alexis, who was the ally of Dewlet Girey Khan against the Genoese, greatly expanded the borders of Theodoro. The principality had diplomatic relations with Moscow.

¹¹⁰ About the history of Crimean Karaites in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries see: G. Akhiezer, "The History of the Crimean Karaites During the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in *Karaite Judaism*, ed., Polliack, 729–59.

gup, Jacob ben Mordekhai¹¹¹ copied there in 1650 *Keter ha-Tora* by Aaron ben Elijah; in 1673 a book *Hilluq ha-Karaim ve-ha-Rabbanim* by Elijah ben Abraham; in 1679, when he stayed in Kaffa, he copied *Asarah Ma'amarot* by Caleb Afendopolo. These and other Byzantine treatises were copied in Sulkhata, Mangup, Chufut-Qal'ehh, and Kaffa, and some of them were published in Evpatoriya by a Karaite printing house which functioned in the nineteenth century. Crimean Karaites also wrote supercommentaries on Byzantine treatises. Moshe Pasha ben Eljah, who lived in the second part of the sixteenth century, wrote a supercommentary on *Haqdamat ha-'Azulah* by Aaron ben Joseph; Samuel ben Joseph of Chufut-Qal'eh (d. 1754) composed a supercommentary on *Sefer ha-Mivhar* by the same author, and so on. Byzantine books became an important part of educational programs of Crimean study houses from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. From the manuscript, which was written by the Karaite student Joseph ben Aryeh in Chufut-Qal'eh (1774),¹¹² one can see which books were learned by Karaite students:

I entered the House of Study of Rabbi Yitshaq Kalfa the most high sage, may God preserve him, and likewise I sat in his House of Study for half a year, altogether three years and within the three years I read *Sefer ha-Mivhar* and the *Sefer Eṣ Hayyim* and *Sefer ha-Moreh*¹¹³ and *Sefer ha-Mizvot*¹¹⁴ and also *Sefer ha-'Adderet*,¹¹⁵ and also I read within the three years some 300 books, both of compositions of our ancient and recent sages and of compositions of the Rabbanites.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ His name is found on many seventeenth-century manuscripts from Mangup. Jacob ben Mordekhai was also the author of a short chronographical text about events in the Crimea and in the Karaite community of Chufut-Qal'ehh, where he obviously stayed for some time. This text was published by Abraham Firkovich in a Russian translation, but the original Hebrew version apparently was lost. See: Jacob ben Mordekhai, "Neskol'ko istoricheskikh zametok," *Vremennik imperatorskago moskovskago obshchestva istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh*, XXIV (Moscow, 1856), 131–4.

¹¹² Later he wrote *Perush 'Asarah 'Iqqarim*—commentary on the ten principles of faith written, as mentioned above, by Elijah Bashyachi and before him—by Judah Hadassi.

¹¹³ Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*.

¹¹⁴ Obviously by Maimonides.

¹¹⁵ The halakhic work *Adderet Eliahu* by Eliahu Bashiatzi.

¹¹⁶ Institute of Oriental Studies of St.-Petersburg, B 156. The full text in English was published in: Akhiezer, "The History of the Crimean Karaites," 742. In Hebrew: G. Akhiezer and D. Lasker, "An Eighteenth-Century Karaite Educational Catechism," *Dor Ledor, Studies in the History of Jewish Education in Israel and the Diaspora* 27 (2006): 14–5.

The influence of Byzantine Karaite scholarship was noticeable also in Lithuanian and Polish communities, where Karaites settled in the fourteenth century.¹¹⁷ The first scholar in Lithuania was Samuel Politi from Byzantium, who came from Adrianople and apparently settled in the community of Troki (the old capital of Lithuania) in the first half of the fifteenth century. His great-grandson was the well-known scholar Zefania ben Mordekhai of Troki. He was a halakhic authority and established new regulations about calendation, which were accepted by part of the Karaites in the Polish-Lithuanian communities. The fifteenth century was a formative period for Lithuanian Karaites, during which communal organization and educational institutions arose and developed. Elijah Bashyachi and Caleb Afendopolo played a great role in forming Karaite education and halakhah in this region. Young Karaites came to Constantinople from Troki, Kiev, and Lutsk to study under these scholars.¹¹⁸ Bashyachi and Afendopolo corresponded with community leaders of these cities,¹¹⁹ instructed them in halakhah issues and in anti-rabbinic polemics, and provided these communities with the books of Byzantine authors and their own treatises. Troki Karaites asked E. Bashyachi in their letter (1483) to send them *Sefer ha-Mizvot* by Tobias ben Moses.¹²⁰ He answered them in his letter (1484):

Concerning the book of Tobias that you asked about and also the commentaries of our sages on twenty-four [books of Bible], we did not find a scribe yet to copy them fast, because the honorable persons, who delivered us your letter could not overstay here until these books would be copied... But now we gave them to the scribes to copy, so let us know who could deliver them to you.¹²¹

The scholar of the Kaffa community, Solomon ben Abraham, who studied in Adrianople under E. Bashyachi (1450) and lived for a long time in Constantinople, finally relocated to Lutsk and brought a large library with him. In his letter to the Karaites of Kiev (1481) this bibliophile attempted to clarify which books his coreligionists had in their

¹¹⁷ About the history of Karaite settlements of Poland-Lithuania see: G. Akhiezer and D. Shapira, "The Karaites in Poland-Lithuania up to the 18th Century," *Pe'amim* 9 (2001): 19–60.

¹¹⁸ See for instance: Mann II, *ibid.*, 1146, document 110.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1139–1177, documents 109–119.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1143.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 1147, "בעוד ספר רבינו טוביא ששאלתם וכן פירוש עשרים וארבעה של חכמינו לא מצאנו סופר להעתיקו במהירה כי הנכבדים שהביאו הכתב מכבודכם לא רצו להתאחר עד שיכתבו הספרים הנזכרים..."

community: "I also have heard that you have there [in Kiev] some of the books of our sages, such as *Sefer ha-Mivḥar*... and *Sefer ha-Mizvot*, and *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, and *Keter ha-Torah*."¹²²

After the demise of Solomon ben Abraham, his library was sold to members of the Lutsk Karaite community.¹²³ From the sixteenth century on, the Karaites of Lithuania and Poland continued to use Byzantine literature as compulsory material for their education,¹²⁴ and Polish and Lithuanian scholars wrote a number of supercommentaries on these books, such as *Sefer ha-Mivḥar* by Aaron ben Judah Troki and *Derekh Yam* (The Sea Road) by Mordecai ben Nisan. Joseph ben Mordecai Malinowsky composed a supercommentary on *Haqdamat ha-'Azulah* and *'Asarah Iqqarim* (Ten Principles) of E. Bashiachi. The historiographical treatises of Elijah ben Abraham, Caleb Aphendopolo, and Moses Bashyachi were copied in Eastern Europe and used by Lithuanian Karaite authors, who wrote treatises under their influence about the schism between Karaites and Rabbanites.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Byzantine Karaite scholarship was formed under the strong influence of the previous literary tradition written in Arabic, especially under that of the Jerusalem school. The uniqueness of the Byzantine Karaite tradition was developed on the one hand by means of their literary project of translating Karaite literature from Arabic into Hebrew, and the use of Hebrew as the only language for their treatises, and by means of creation of their own halakhic tradition and new philosophical views, which were formed under strong Rabbanite influence, on the other.

Their historical self-identification developed in the course of polemics with Rabbanites and during fierce critiques against doctrines of different heresies, especially that of Mishawites. Byzantine Karaite literary legacy had a great impact on Crimean Karaites and Polish-Lithuanian Karaite communities, which adopted this legacy during Byzantine and

¹²² Ibid., 1173–1174.

¹²³ Ibid., 713/4; 1175/6.

¹²⁴ See about Karaite education in Eastern Europe: Akhiezer and Lasker, "Karaites," 12–6.

Ottoman periods, to a large extent thanks to the personal involvement of Byzantine and Ottoman scholars.

It should be pointed out that the Rabbanite and Karaite Byzantine communities not only rose, but also developed in different ways.¹²⁵ As a result of a strong Sefardi cultural impact, which stemmed from the late fourteenth century and continued during the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, Romaniote Jewry gradually switched from the Greek language to Judesmo and Ladino. They also assimilated the Sephardic cultural legacy. This process of assimilation caused the oblivion of their own roots and traditions; the disappearance of texts, especially written in Greek, which were no longer copied. In contrast to Rabbanites, Karaites maintained the Greek language, which they still used in the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding some rapprochement to Rabbanites in the fifteenth century, studies under Rabbanite scholars and some liberalization of their halakhah, which, as a result, became closer to that of rabbinic, Karaites maintained their own tradition and continued to copy and to print their own treatises. They remained a separate entity within the Jewish people due to the perpetual desire of Karaite communities to maintain their particular self-identification, both historical and confessional.

As one can see, that there are a plenty of lacunas in our knowledge of the history, culture, and literature of Byzantine Karaite communities, which stem from the lack of sources. The research of this subject is far from being exhaustive. Two main directions could be suggested. The first is the examination of Byzantine and early Ottoman archival material concerning Byzantine Karaites, especially in the two manuscript collections of A. Firkovich.¹²⁶ Another important direction of investigation could be the comparison of all Karaite Byzantine treatises printed and censored in the Russian Empire with existing manuscripts. It would be a desirable project to publish critical editions. In addition, a very important research project could be an investigation of the influence of the Greek literature and language on Karaite literature.

¹²⁵ See about it: Bowman, *Jews*, 198.

¹²⁶ There is not yet a complete united catalogue with the description of all the items of these collections. In addition to Firkovich's collections, there are other collections of manuscripts, such as Abraham Harkavy in the Judaica department of Kiev Vernadski's State Library, which contains various Byzantine Karaite materials.

PART III

IMAGES

BARBARIANS OR HERETICS? JEWS AND ARABS IN THE MIND OF BYZANTIUM (FOURTH TO EIGHTH CENTURIES)

Guy G. Stroumsa

For Averil Cameron

Averil Cameron has devoted many efforts to probing the complex relationship between Jews and Byzantines. In particular, by focusing on the sixth- and seventh-centuries polemics between Christians and Jews she has illuminated in various ways the intellectual and spiritual milieu on the eve of the Islamic conquest. In the article “Jews and Heretics—a Category Mistake,” she shows how the terms ‘Jew’ and ‘heretic’ became interchangeable in the thought of Byzantine theologians. Professor Cameron concludes: “We are not, then, in the presence of a category error, after all, and any sense of discomfort is our own.”¹

Her questioning of semantic shifts in major categories of religious thought is the basis for my starting point in approaching the question of early Byzantine religious identity from the highly singular angle of its margins. *Prima facie*, a comparison between the respective perceptions of Jews and Arabs in the Christianized Eastern Roman Empire may appear to lack real intellectual justification. There seems to be little in common between Jews and Arabs in Late Antiquity. The linguistic similarities between Hebrew and Arabic would not be discovered (and the category of Semitic languages would not be invented) before Leibniz, in the seventeenth century. The Jews, whom Augustine called *librarii nostri*, shared the Bible (more precisely, the books of the Old Testament) with the Christians, while the Arabs, usually perceived as utter barbarians, nomads stemming from the desert, had very little in common with the Christians. I shall deal here with perceptions both before and after the battle of Yarmuk and the Islamic conquest

¹ See Av. Cameron, “Jews and Heretics—A Category Error?” in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds., A. Becker and A. Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen, 2003), 345–60. This paper was read at Oxford on 5 May 2010, in honor of the retirement of Professor Dame Averil Cameron. My thanks to Maria Mavroudi and Youval Rotman for their useful comments on a draft of this paper.

of Jerusalem (in 636 and 638 respectively), which provided, of course, the main watershed in Byzantine attitudes to Arabs.

And yet, the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen (born circa 400 in Bethelia, near Gaza), tells us about various Judaizing practices, such as circumcision and a prohibition of eating pork, among the *sarakenoi*. The origin of such practices, he adds, would come from the recognition of their kinship with the Jews, through their common ancestor Abraham.² As shown by Fergus Millar, such a new image of the Arabs in Late Antiquity stemmed from Josephus's perception of the Ishmaelites.³

Let us note right away the profound difference that exists between the modern study of Jews and of Arabs in antiquity. Ethnic and religious identity, which was relatively weak among the Syrians, for example, was very pronounced among the Jews, who made a point of preserving their national identity in a cosmopolitan world, despite the loss, in the first century, of all political power and the destruction of the central symbol of their religion. In addition, research on the Jews is far more advanced than that on pre-Islamic Arabs or Christians, who unfortunately have stirred too little interest so far. What justifies a comparison between the perception of Jews and of Arabs is the fact that these were two groups of people who, although certainly very different from one another, shared the common character, from the seventh century on, of being neither Christians nor polytheists.

As I hope we shall see, the juxtaposition of Late Antique and Early Byzantine attitudes to Jews and Arabs might shed light on some fundamental ambiguities in early Byzantine consciousness and on the semantic evolution of a few major concepts through which identity, both ethnic and religious, was defined. More precisely, I shall seek to understand a little better the ways in which the concepts of 'heresy' and 'barbarism' played a role in the perception of both Jews and Arabs.

² Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, II.4 and VI.38. On this festival, see A. Kofsky, "Mamre: A Case of a Regional Cult?" in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land: First-Fifteenth Centuries CE*, eds., A. Kofsky and G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem, 1998), 19–30. See further E. Fowden, "Sharing Holy Places," *Common Knowledge* 8 (2002): 124–46.

³ See, for example, F. Millar, "Empire, Community and Culture in the Roman Near East: Greeks, Syrians, Jews and Arabs," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38 (1987): 143–64.

My purpose here is to try to take apart the mechanisms, or at least some of them, which determined how outsiders were perceived in the Christianized Roman world. It is, I think, partly due to the very fact of the remarkable linguistic continuity of the Byzantine Empire that certain major transformations of collective identity, and hence of the perceptions of what the French call *'l'autre,'* remain concealed and need to be unveiled. James Howard-Johnston has rightly noted that we should never underestimate ideological inertia in the life of states and nations. More precisely, he insists on the fact that the Byzantines did not only consider themselves to be the inheritors of the Roman Empire: they thought of themselves as Romans.⁴ This is also how they were called in other languages, a fact reflected in both Arabic and Hebrew sources. In the same volume, Cyril Mango calls attention to the Byzantine perception of the various Christian heresies as reflecting Satan's many manipulations, adding that the Empire considered its principal task to be the guardian of correct ideology.⁵ Both are right, of course, and the Byzantines were that oxymoron: Romans enrolled in a cosmic fight against the devil. The late Evelyne Patlagean was quite aware of this oxymoron. In her own words, "the accent is put on Christianity, as the carrier of the universal values of *Romanitas*."⁶ If ideological inertia can go hand-in-hand with radical transformations, the major concepts with which the Byzantines both identified themselves and perceived outsiders could become quite inadequate for dealing with a changed reality, as Cyril Mango argued long ago. In this regard, following the sociologist Ann Swidler, I propose to see in the major concepts with which ethnic and religious identities are built and perceived repertoires of sorts, or 'tool kits' of habits, skills, and styles from which strategies of action are constructed.⁷ Societies, just like individuals, make use of the cultural tools they inherit, but these are not always entirely adequate for the new tasks expected of them

⁴ J. Howard-Johnston, "Byzantium and its Neighbours," in *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed., E. Jeffreys (Oxford, 2008), 952. On the Byzantines' perception of the Romans, see R. Browning, "Greeks and Others: From Antiquity to the Renaissance," in *Greeks and Barbarians*, ed., T. Harrison (Edinburgh, 2002), 257-77.

⁵ C. Mango, "Byzantium's Role in World History," *ibid.*, 957.

⁶ See E. Patlagean, "Byzance, le barbare, l'hérétique, et la loi universelle," in *Ni juif, ni grec*, ed. L. Poliakov (Paris, 1978), 81-90. Reprinted in E. Patlagean, *Structure sociale, famille, chrétienté à Byzance* (London, 1981).

⁷ See in particular A. Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 273-86.

in changing conditions. In such conditions, tensions, ambivalences, and contradictions develop. In the case of the Christianized Roman Empire, as we shall see, the problem is compounded by the fact that both as Romans and as Christians, the Byzantines retained sets of quite different concepts. They did not keep these sets of 'tool kits' separate, but used them together, creating new, complex categories, which we will try to deconstruct. The situation is even more complicated: while the Byzantines were politically and culturally Romans, religiously they were Hebrews (they were, actually, the real Hebrews, *versus Israel*, as they alone correctly understood the Scriptures and prophecies). And, of course, linguistically, they were Greeks, a fact at once trivial and highly problematic, as '*hellen*,' for Christians, referred to pagans, polytheists.

From the earliest times on, the twin terms *hellēn/barbaros* had continually undergone semantic shifts of various kinds, a fact well studied in the *longue durée* by Albrecht Dihle.⁸ As far back as the earliest social groups, collective identity had always been represented in terms of a dichotomy between the self and the other. From Hellenistic times onward, contacts between the ethnicities, cultures, and religions of the Mediterranean and Near East became so complex that there ensued a series of transformations, sometimes radical, of the key concepts in ethnological designations.

Before we ask about early Byzantine ethnological categories, we must go back to earlier strata of Christian literature and to the formative period when these categories were first established, a time when the Christians were still outlawed, if not persecuted, and long before they became proud Romans. The scriptural foundation upon which Christian ethnological categories were constructed was without a doubt Colossians 3:11: "Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all."⁹ Thus from the very outset Christians inherited Jewish categories, even though they rejected them: for the Jews, humanity was divided into Jews and non-Jews (*goyyim* [peoples] in Hebrew, translated as *ethnē* in LXX). For the Jews of the Hellenistic world, these *ethnē* were the Greeks, *hellēnes*, a word which became equivalent to

⁸ For a diachronic study of this long span, see A. Dihle, *Die Griechen und die Fremden* (Munich, 1994). See also *Greeks and Barbarians*, ed., T. Harrison (New York, 2002).

⁹ Cf. Gal. 6:15 and Gal. 3:28, which include the elimination of the categories "man" and "woman."

pagans.¹⁰ Thus early Christians inherited a double distinction, the Greek one between *hellēnes* and *barbaroi*, on the one hand, and the Jewish one, between *hellēnes* and *ioudaioi*, on the other. Moreover, as followers of the Law of Moses, a text originally redacted in Hebrew, even Hellenophone Jews considered themselves, and were regarded by the Greeks, as followers of a *philosophia barbaros* (a wisdom written down in a foreign language, as Clement of Alexandria, following Philo, termed the Torah).¹¹

In a study of early Christian ethnological representations published years ago, I asked how Christian intellectuals in Late Antiquity perceived the different peoples with whom they were in contact, and whether they succeeded in establishing their own ethnological categories, distinct from those they had inherited from the Hellenistic and Roman worlds.¹² The only answer I reached in regard to this question was admittedly disappointing. Although Christianity was conceived and presented, from its earliest beginnings, as a new truth open to all peoples, translatable into any language, accessible to all cultures, it would only be with the Spanish *frayles*, missionaries to the New World at the start of the modern era, that a truly ethnological approach, in the vein of Herodotus, a real effort to understand cultures in their own terms, would come to light.¹³ It seems that the very ecumenical ambitions of the Christians blunted or even neutralized their ability to develop a real ethnological curiosity and to discern the distinctive qualities of the various peoples. After all, these peoples had all been, before their conversion, pagans. And paganism, in its many garbs, was of no intellectual interest whatsoever, as it was established upon falsehood. The same truth had been offered to all. And religious truth, the saving incarnation of God's Son, was the only thing that mattered.

¹⁰ It should be noted, however, that the Greeks were also differentiated from the *ethnoi* in classical literature. See, for example, Aristotle, *Politics* VII.II.3 (1324b10).

¹¹ *Strom.* 2.2.5, 5.9.57, 5.14.93.

¹² G. Stroumsa, "Philosophy of the Barbarians: On Early Christian Ethnological Representations" in *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion: Festschrift Martin Hengel 2*, eds., H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger and P. Schaefer (Tübingen, 1996), 339–68; reprinted in G. Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (Tübingen, 1999), 57–84.

¹³ See, for example, A. Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge, 1982); C. Bernand and S. Gruzinski, *De l'idolâtrie: une archéologie des sciences religieuses* (Paris, 1988); F. Diez, *El impacto de las religiones indígenas americanas en la teología misionera del S. XVI* (Bilbao, 2000).

Truth remained one, while multiplicity was a sign of error. And yet, it would seem that the early Christian thinkers, followers of a “barbarian philosophy,” should have developed at least a tacit sympathy for the barbarian nations outside the Hellenic cultural realm. Certainly until the fourth century, some Christian authors, at least, saw themselves both as followers of a “barbarian philosophy” and as being ethnic ‘barbarians.’ Thus Tatian, in his *Address to the Greeks*, written towards the middle of the second century, proudly presents himself as an ‘Assyrian’: that is, for him, a barbarian *in bonam partem*, who rejects the false wisdom of the Greeks, while possessing a better, ‘barbarian’ kind of wisdom. Thus Rufinus, at the very start of his *Ecclesiastical History*, written in the late fourth century, proudly describes how Christianity was introduced to the Armenians, the Ethiopians, the Iberians (or Georgians), and the Saracens (or Arabs), in compliance with the evangelical injunction: “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.”¹⁴

Indeed, Christians, even in the Christianized Roman Empire, while politically and culturally Romans, retained some ‘barbarian’ traits in their identity. Firstly, they were heirs to the Jews and thus guardians of that barbarian wisdom par excellence, the Bible, a book written in Hebrew even if read in Greek translation. And what a translation! The Greek of the Septuagint cannot, any more than that of the New Testament, be seriously considered as the polished, elegant, even sublime language one expects of a book of wisdom, especially one that claims to have been divinely revealed. Early Christian writers proudly accepted the charge leveled at them by pagan writers, such as Celsus, of being simplistic, of lacking intellectual sophistication. The very linguistic rusticity of the Christian scriptures answered the accusation: if these were written in a language of fishermen, it was precisely because they were intended to bring salvation to all in equal measure, illiterates and philosophers alike. Thus the Christians, aware of being marginalized by the intellectual elites, accepted this fact, identifying with a wisdom that was foreign to that of the Greek philosophers, and was therefore barbarian.

The absolute legitimacy of translating the scriptures became a tenet and fact of Christianity (though not of the two other Abrahamic religions), and is thus part of the legacy of early Christianity. All is trans-

¹⁴ Mark 16:15; cf. Matthew 28:18–20.

latable: divine revelation is entirely within the realm of prose, not of poetry, as the Greeks would have it. For the Christians, it was the Greek philosophers, the old pagan elites, who had to be discredited and toppled from their pedestals by the followers of the new “barbarian philosophy.” But the issue was more complicated, as the Christians were not simply another barbarian people. They lived among Greeks and barbarians alike, without quite belonging to them. The Christians, therefore, were not like any other people. They represented a people of another order, between Greeks and Jews, a third kind of people famously called in the *Epistle to Diognetus*, in the second century, *triton genos* (*tertium genus*). The Syriac theologian Aphrahat, “the Persian Sage,” would speak, in the fourth century, of ‘*ama de-‘amame*, a people among peoples. Despite both their vituperative argument with the Jews and their ecumenism, the Christians refused to relinquish the historical, geographical, and ethnic roots of their religion, and insisted on seeing themselves as the legitimate successors to Israel: *verus Israel*.¹⁵ Constantinople, therefore, would be the new Jerusalem as much as the new Rome. Only the Manichaeans would bring to its radical consequences the Marcionite tendency to give up completely on the Jewish dimension of Christian identity.

In the fourth century, “pagan” intellectuals, realizing the balance of power had shifted in a dramatic fashion, learned to recognize the virtues of religious pluralism, and developed new arguments in favour of religious toleration. Symmachus, in his *Relation* 8, puts it thus:

Everyone has his own custom and his own rite; the divine mind has allotted a variety of religions to the city as its guardians. As different souls are distributed to the newborn, so are different spirits of destiny to each people.¹⁶

¹⁵ On this theme, the seminal book by M. Simon, *Verus Israel: Etude sur les relations entre juifs et chrétiens dans l'empire romain (135–425)* (Paris 1964 [1948]), remains unsurpassed.

¹⁶ This text is quoted and discussed in M. Edwards, “Romanitas and the Church of Rome,” in *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire*, eds., S. Swain and M. Edwards (Oxford, 2004), 187–210, see esp. 207. See R. Barrow, *Prefect and Emperor: The Relations of Symmachus, A.D. 384* (Oxford, 1973). On the dialectic of pagan and Christian attitudes, see A. Armstrong, “The Way and the Ways: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in the Fourth Century A.D.,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984): 1–17.

Of particular import, in this context, is what one might call the privatization of religion. With the growing numbers of conversions to Christianity, it was inevitable that pluralism would become established in the empire. At issue was a new reality that had to be recognized. Themistius, another great pagan intellectual of the generation of Emperor Julian, proposes a division into three ethnic groups, or rather, three cultural and religious domains: Greece, homeland of polytheistic Hellenism; Syria, homeland of the Jews and thus also representing the Christians; and Egypt, symbolic homeland of the mystical religions.¹⁷ As Gilbert Dagron notes in an important study, “the assimilation of major religious concepts into the major provinces of the empire has a [...] philosophical significance: it reduces the problem of rival religions to a problem of vicinity and concurrent civilizations.”¹⁸

An analogous tripartition is found in Eusebius, between Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Hellenes.¹⁹ With Themistius, the Syrians (alias the Christians) have replaced the Phoenicians: ethnic division has taken on a religious coloration. Indeed, Jews were often regarded by Greek philosophers (such as Porphyry, for instance, who reflects a long tradition) as having been the Syrians’ intellectual and religious élite, their philosophers (just as the Brahmins represented the Indian élite). We should note the importance, in such a context, of the fact that Christianity, like Judaism, was regarded as stemming from the East.

For our purpose, it is important to observe the new manner in which relations between ethnic and religious identities were formulated in the Byzantine Empire.²⁰ From the fourth century and at least up to the eleventh, when Byzantine military victories led to the absorption of sizeable Muslim populations into the empire, there was an approximate equivalence between religious and political identity; until that time it was not possible to be Roman without being Christian. For the first Byzantines were also Romans—“Romans of old stock,” *katharoi*

¹⁷ Themistius, *Orationes*, eds., I. Schenkl and G. Downey (Leipzig, 1965 [1951]), 102–3.

¹⁸ G. Dagron, “L’empire romain d’orient au IV^e siècle et les traditions politiques de l’hellénisme: le témoignage de Thémistios,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 3 (Paris, 1968), 149–86, on p. 156.

¹⁹ Eus. *P.E.* I; *Laud. Const.* 13.1.

²⁰ On this issue, compare the approach taken by Cyril Mango, who argues that the Byzantines could only express themselves using the terminology of classical literature, with that of Alexander Kazhdan. See C. Mango, *Byzantine Literature as a Distorting Mirror* (Oxford, 1974); A. Kazhdan, “Ethnology,” *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 2 (Oxford, 1991), 744b.

rōmaioi—who were directly concerned with the welfare of the empire. And they knew the barbarians were at the gates: the Huns, sowing panic in the Near East at the beginning of the fifth century; later the Bulgars and the Slavs from the Balkans; above all, the Muslims—Arabs at first, then, from the eleventh century, Turks. These were long-term confrontations that would be indelibly imprinted on Byzantine consciousness. As Héléne Ahrweiler has shown, the blend of fear and contempt that the barbarian nomads provoked among the Byzantines resonated as the very definition of “quintessential cultural alterity.”²¹ The Byzantines, who saw themselves as both the chosen people and as the *Kulturvolk* par excellence, drew a radical distinction between Christians and non-Christians. In this context two interesting and related concepts may be noted: *mixobarbaros*, semi-barbarian, and *mixellēn*, semi-pagan. These curious terms, found in the eleventh century on the Balkan borders in particular, were already in existence in Late Antiquity—for instance in the sixth-century writings of Dioscoros, where reference is made to a strange person living on the margins of the known world and mixing with pagans, who also represent a *Naturvolk*, though his purpose is to convert them to Christianity.²² The Byzantines, however, like the Greeks and Romans before them, knew how to distinguish—in the case of peoples foreign to their cultural universe—between *Naturvölker* and *Kulturvölker*. From ancient times, the cultural links between the Greeks and the peoples of the Near East had given rise to a long tradition of attraction to the peoples of the East and their “barbarian” wisdom. Thus the Indians, for example, though not the Arabs, were perceived as a *Kulturvolk*, with a cultural tradition deemed to be rich even though there was virtually no knowledge of its substance, and the books in which this wisdom was expressed could not be read. Moreover, it seems that the Christian perception of Indians and their culture was not much different from the views found in Greek and Latin pagan texts.²³

²¹ H. Ahrweiler, “Byzantine Concepts of the Foreigner: The Case of the Nomads,” in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, eds., H. Ahrweiler and A. Laiou (Washington, D.C. 1998), 1–15, esp. 12. On the concept of the barbarian in late antiquity, see P. Heather, “The Barbarian in Late Antiquity: Image, Reality, and Transformation,” in *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, ed., R. Miles (London, 1999), 234–58.

²² For an analysis of this strange text, see Dijkstra, “A World Full of the Word: The Biblical Learning of Dioscoros,” 135–46.

²³ See G. Stroumsa, “Philosophy of the Barbarians.” Cf. V. Christides, “Arabs as ‘barbaroi’ before the Rise of Islam,” *Byzantine Studies* 10 (1969): 315–24.

Let us summarize what we have uncovered so far about the complex interface between the two highly different ethnological taxonomies through which Christians perceived identity. The superposition of these taxonomies in early Byzantium meant that for Christianized Romans, the concept of "barbarian" had connotations that were distinctly negative politically and culturally, but positive with respect to religion.

As believers in Jesus Christ, they confronted the Jews.

As [the true] Israel, they confronted the pagans, or *hellenes*.

As followers of a 'barbarian wisdom,' they confronted the Greeks.

As Romans, they confronted the barbarians.

We have seen how the category *barbaros*, originally a linguistic term that Hellenistic Jews, and subsequently Christians, had used for their self-representation, retained its original meaning in Byzantium, where, side-by-side with its Christian, positive meaning, it referred to pagan peoples beyond the confines of the empire. From the fourth to the seventh centuries, the Christianization of the Arabs, both in Syrian towns and among the tribes, seems to have curtailed any ethnological interest in them. Although the Arabs remained marginal on account of their language and culture, they underwent a process of integration into the empire, and the Arab kingdoms, whether or not Christian, functioned as "buffer" territories vis-à-vis the Sassanian enemy.

The Byzantine Empire, then, defined itself through Christian Orthodoxy, which entailed the rejection of religious factions which did not receive imperial support, such as Arians and Monophysites, as heretics. Heresy was forbidden by imperial decree, just like the cult of pagan gods, a fact reflected, in particular, in book XVI of the Theodosian Code.²⁴ If the followers of the Monophysite Churches were not actively harried, it was above all because there was no way of eradicating a Christian movement that dominated a good part of the Near East. It has been suggested—a hypothesis that cannot be demonstrated, but which is by no means absurd—that the Byzantines were relieved when the Arabs conquered a good part of the imperial territories in

²⁴ On the concept of heresy in Byzantium, see, for example, J. Gouillard, "L'hérésie dans l'empire byzantin, des origines au XII^e siècle," *Travaux et Mémoires* 1 (1965): 299–324; also J. Hamilton and B. Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, c.650–c.1405* (Manchester, 1998).

the seventh century, and that to some extent, it even welcomed the conquest.²⁵ Since the end of the fourth century, and more markedly from the time of Justinian on, the Jews lost many of their civil rights and became marginalized in a society that defined itself as Christian. Yet they preserved the right to an existence that, although precarious, was a recognized fact. It should be emphasized that the Jews were the only legally sanctioned religious minority in the empire. Indeed, under Justinian, unity of worship made unity of the empire a direct function of religious unity, a fact which enabled the emperor to turn religious heresy into political contamination.²⁶ In practice, Justinian's religious policy compelled the Jews to define themselves as a community along the lines of the Christian orthodox model.

Justinian's proclamation, in February 553, of his Novella 146, *peri hebraiōn*, is very revealing here: at the pretext of a disagreement between the Jews over the legitimacy of the ritual reading of the Bible in translation in the synagogue cult, he decided to involve himself directly in the argument and ruling over permitted and forbidden synagogue ritual. He encouraged the Jews to read the Bible in their synagogues, not only in Hebrew, but also in translation, be it in Greek, Latin, or another vernacular (when in Greek, the only version authorized by the Novella is the LXX, which was inspired), and prohibited the study of the Mishna (*deuterōsis*).²⁷ Justinian's famous ruling, which has been analyzed from a number of viewpoints, certainly reflects the Byzantines' sense of cultural superiority, which made them scorn barbarian languages and ignore them. In this, they were the cultural heirs of the Greeks.²⁸ This scorn and ignorance they applied to the language of the revealed Bible.

²⁵ See, for example, Y. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State* (Amherst, 2003).

²⁶ See N. de Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks or Romans? Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium," in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, ed., D. Smythe (Ashgate, 2000), 105–18.

²⁷ See, for example, G. Stroumsa, "Religious Dynamics between Christians and Jews in Late Antiquity," in *Cambridge History of Christianity, 300–600*, eds., F. Norris and A. Casiday (Cambridge, 2007), 151–72.

²⁸ However it seems that over time, a certain bilingualism became increasingly common among high-ranking Byzantine officials. See A. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley, 1990), 183 and 259–60.

Thus the Byzantine millennium did not, to my knowledge, produce a single Hebraist, no one like Jerome, defender of *hebraica veritas*.²⁹ By encouraging the Jews to forego the sole use of Hebrew in reading the Holy Scriptures, imperial power sought to deprive them of both their own identity and of the major linguistic ‘advantage’ they had over the Christians, as they alone could read the Bible in the original text. As Leonard Rutgers puts it, “Justinian realized full well that their access to Hebrew gave the Jews power.”³⁰ By forbidding them the study of the Mishna, moreover, he was going even further in seeking to strip them of their own interpretation of Scripture. In a sense, he thus sought to leave them no alternative to eventually accepting the Christian interpretation of Scripture. As I have argued elsewhere, it is no mere chance that the redaction of the Mishna, in the last decades of the second century, strictly parallels the first mentions (by Irenaeus) of the corpus which we call the New Testament.³¹ Throughout the second century, both Jews and Christians, in a series of battles over self-definition, had confronted the pagans, their own different interpretations, which would soon become ‘heresies,’ and one another. In a sense, one can speak of a race between the two communities, throughout the century, to find the correct hermeneutical key for the correct understanding of Scripture. Both the New Testament and the Mishna gradually became the proposed keys: either the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible were announcing the coming of the Messiah, or they were to be understood as the Law of Israel, to be interpreted through the Rabbinic authorities. By forbidding the Jews to study the Mishna, Justinian was stripping them of their own religious autonomy and transforming them, as it were, into a heterodox or heretical Christian community. He thus clearly stated the hope that reading the prophetic texts that announced the coming of Christ might eventually lead Jews to convert. All the same, if the Jews were becoming Christian her-

²⁹ This total lack of curiosity regarding Hebrew might have derived in part from the Byzantines’ perception that they were *verus Israel*, as argued by M.-H. Congourdeau, “Le judaïsme, cœur de l’identité byzantine,” in *Les chrétiens et les juifs dans le sociétés de rites grec et latin*, eds., M. Dmitriev, D. Tollet and E. Teiro (Paris, 2003), 17–27. But it obviously reflected a traditional Greek lack of interest in other languages.

³⁰ See L. Rutgers, “Justinian’s Novella 146 between Jews and Christians,” in *Jewish Culture and Society under the Christian Roman Empire*, eds., R. Kalmin and S. Schwartz (Leuven, 2003), 385–407.

³¹ G. Stroumsa, “The Body of Truth and its Measures: New Testament Canonization in Context,” in *Gnosisforschung und Religionswissenschaft: Festschrift Kurt Rudolph*, eds., H. Priessler and H. Seiwert (Marburg, 1995), 307–16.

etics of sorts, they remained privileged heretics, since they still had the right to an existence, albeit constrained by various impositions, and sometimes by persecution. I should like to add that by defining a tolerated, though inferior status for the Jews, Justinian laid the foundation for the Islamic attitude to non-Muslim monotheists—"peoples of the Book" (sing. *ahl al-kitāb*) as the Qur'an calls them, a term that would soon include Zoroastrians alongside Jews and Christians—as legitimate but subordinate minorities, or *dhimmi*, under Muslim sovereignty. The Islamic concept of the *dhimmi* can be found *in nuce* in Justinian's attitude to the Jews. The Muslim conquerors of the Near Eastern Byzantine provinces would only need to broaden its use to Christians as well.

The Byzantine transformation of Judaism into a kind of Christian heresy, which strikes us as paradoxical, made sense internally. For early Christian thinkers, the history of Christianity (and of heresy) started with humanity, rather than with the Incarnation. *Anima naturaliter christiana*, wrote Tertullian even before the end of the second century. Indeed, from the very beginnings of humanity, Christianity had represented the only authentic and legitimate religious position.³² This idea, launched by Paul (Romans 1:18–23), had been echoed by Eusebius in the fourth century. Christian thinkers remained unable to conceive of a monotheism shared by a number of different, legitimate religions. Since Christianity was *verus Israel*, *vetus Israel* represented a perversion of Christian truth and was, in a way, a heresy.

Yuhanna ibn Mansur, alias John of Damascus, was the son of a high-ranking official of the Abbasid caliphate, and died around the mid-eighth century in the monastery of Mar Sabas, in the Judean wilderness. He was the last of the great Greek Patristic authors, and is the first Christian writer to mention Islam, at the end of his work on heresies. The work begins thus, following the structure of universal history: "The forbears and archetypes of all heresies are four in number: 1. Barbarism, 2. Scythianism, 3. Hellenism, 4. Judaism. It is from these four that all the others proceed." John received this particular perspective from the patristic tradition of heresiography, notably its best-known work, the *Panarion* of Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus

³² *Apol.* 17.

in the fourth century and a native of Eleutheropolis (Beit Guvrin) in Palestine. Barbarism prevailed from Adam to Noah, while from Noah to the Tower of Babel it was Scythianism; Hellenism was born of the idolatry prevalent at the time of Serug, while Judaism dated from the circumcision of Abraham. John's conception of heresy retains some of the features already apparent in Josephus Flavius, which referred to political factions as much as to religious attitudes. John, who took a particular interest in Hellenism, cites Colossians 3:11 as the direct source of his taxonomy.³³ Three of the prototypes of heresy mentioned by John thus demarcate the major successive stages in the religious history of humanity. Barbarism, Scythianism, Hellenism: these were historical categories belonging to the past. Only Judaism was still alive, representing, one might say (to use Arnold Toynbee's phrase), "a fossilized religion in a Christianized world."

For John of Damascus, nascent Islam represented another kind of heresy, the most recent one, which "appeared in our time," heralded by a false prophet who in his preaching claimed to have received from heaven a book of divine revelation. This false prophet was spreading his shameless lies among barbarians who were still polytheists a short while ago. "These dogs of Ishmael, this barbarian stock that delights in murder," he calls the Arabs. In moving from *Jahilliya* (the period of 'ignorance') to Islam, according to Islamic historiography, the Arabs switched from barbarism, associated with paganism, to monotheism.³⁴ Other Greek testimonies on the Arabs that have reached us from the seventh century accord with this attitude. In his Christmas sermon from 734, Sophronius of Jerusalem expresses his fear of the Saracens,

³³ The term *hellēnismos*, already in use in the sixth century B.C. in the writings of Theagnes of Rhegium (*Testimonia*, fragment 1a), occurs in a Jewish text, 2 Maccabees 4.13. For a study of John's attitude to Islam in its historical context, see *Jean Damascène, Ecrits sur l'Islam*, ed. and trans. R. Le Coz, Sources Chrétiennes 383 (Paris, 1992). On the anti-Islamic literature of Byzantium, see A.-T. Khoury, *Polémique byzantine contre l'Islam* (VIII^e-XIII^e s.), (Leyden, 1972).

³⁴ For a discussion of some Christian perceptions of Arabs before the advent of Islam, see, for example, D. Caner, "Sinai Pilgrimage and Ascetic Romance: Pseudo-Nilus's *Narrationes* in Context," in *Travel, Communication and Geography in Late Antiquity, Sacred and Profane*, eds., L. Ellis and F. Kidner (Burlington, 2004), 135-47. On the Arabs in Late Antiquity, one must of course mention the monumental work of I. Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs, Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century, Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century, Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, published in Washington, D.C. (by Dumbarton Oaks), between 1984 and 2010.

referring to the fact that the conquering army prevents Christians from walking from the holy city to Bethlehem. On his side, Maximus the Confessor (who died in 662) describes the Arabs as a barbarian people coming from the desert to ravage civilized regions like wild beasts. For him they were the instrument of divine punishment, inflicted upon the Christian empire for its sins.³⁵ A similar picture of the Arabs is found in the *Narrationes* of Pseudo-Nil (a text difficult to accurately date): the pre-Islamic Arabs live like ferocious animals, eat flesh, and cannot even be called idolaters since they have no gods whatsoever. But as monotheism was identical to Christianity (or to Judaism, i.e., incomplete Christianity), Islamized Arabs, whose strict monotheism could not be denied, would now be perceived, like the Jews, as heretics, side-by-side with their old perception as barbarian nomads from the desert, which would be very slow to disappear. One might add here that those Arab tribes which had converted to Christianity before the seventh century were often considered to have heretic proclivities.

After the initial shock of the seventh and eighth centuries, the Byzantines would acclimate to the Arab-Muslim enemy, as they had gotten used to the continued existence of the Jews, an existence that remained, however, a theological outrage.³⁶ It was a conflict that would set the scene for centuries. Elizabeth Jeffreys has clearly noted the two opposite strands in the Byzantine attitudes to the Arabs.³⁷ One would even sometimes tolerate the enemy and, in rare instances, respect him. Byzantium would also have its humanists, who would recognize the political, as opposed to religious nature of the conflict, and would acknowledge the respect due to the other, the Muslim. Thus, in the second half of the tenth century, for instance, Patriarch Polyeuktos rejected the demand by Emperor Nikephoros Phokas that soldiers killed in battle against the Muslims be regarded as martyrs: those whose occupation it was to spill blood should not be thus sanctified.³⁸

³⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Letter 14* (PG 91, 533–34).

³⁶ For the theological transformations inspired by the advent of Islam, see J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), chapter 9, esp. 337–48.

³⁷ E. Jeffreys, “The Image of the Arabs in Byzantine Literature,” in *The Seventeenth International Byzantine Congress—Major Papers* (New Rochelle, 1986), 305–23.

³⁸ Text cited in A. Ducellier, *Byzance et le monde orthodoxe* (Paris, 1986), 288. Cf. G. Dagron, “‘Ceux d’en face’: les peuples étrangers dans les traités militaires byzantins,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 10 (1987): 207–32. See also N.-M. El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs 36 (Cambridge, 2004), and the survey by M. Mavroudi in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (2007). On the issue of holy war,

As for the Jews, Byzantine theologians would continue considering them as abettors of heresy, thanks to their magical gifts and their privileged connections with the devil. Moreover, there is a tantalizing possibility that certain heresies, notably in Phrygia—for example, the Athinganoi (“untouchables”) of the ninth century—were close in origin to Judeo-Christian groups, groups which do not seem to have completely withered away in the Christianized Roman Empire. But that is another story.³⁹

I have sought here, through some rather loose-knit observations, to reflect upon certain shifts in the key concepts employed by one society to perceive others, shifts fuelled by the existence of not one, but at least two sets of ethnological taxonomies in the early Byzantines’ ‘tool kit.’ Whereas Christianized Rome transformed the concept of barbarian through its own ambivalence to it, Romanized Christianity expanded the concept of heresy, as it could not conceive of a non-Christian monotheistic religion. Hence, the Byzantines (like so many other societies, past and present) were unable to develop a lucid understanding of both Jews and Arabs. For them, Jews and Arabs retained an unstable status, at once barbarians and heretics, ever on the limes. This status, indeed, did not represent a category error. But it reflected a discomfort with Judaism as well as with Islam, a discomfort deeply ingrained in Christianized *Romanitas*.

see A. Laiou, “On Just War in Byzantium,” in *To Hellinikon, Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis I*, ed., J. Langdon (New Rochelle, 1993), 153–77; and N. Oikonomides, “The Concept of Holy War and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivoires,” in *Peace and War in Byzantium, Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis*, eds., T. Miller and J. Nesbitt (Washington, D.C. 1995), 62–86.

³⁹ On the Athinganoi, see J. Starr, “An Eastern Christian Sect: The Athinganoi,” *Harvard Theological Review* 29 (1936): 93–106.

IMAGES OF JEWS IN BYZANTINE CHRONICLES: A GENERAL SURVEY

Rivkah Fishman-Duker*

In Memory of Dr. Yaron Dan

I. INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarship has devoted renewed attention to the position and condition of Jews in Byzantine society over the centuries.¹ Always part of the multi-ethnic Byzantine state, Jews have emerged from relative obscurity and have become the subjects of learned studies ranging from their images in art and in polemical literature, and even of articles which mention their existence in any type of written document, from a legal contract to a piece of poetry.² These works contribute to our understanding of Byzantine attitudes to Jews and their place in Byzantine society—subjects which had been neglected until some twenty years ago.³

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¹ Av. Cameron, "Byzantines and Jews: Some Recent Works on Early Byzantium," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 249–74.

² On neglect of the study of Byzantine Jews, see: N. de Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks or Romans? Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium," in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, ed., D. Smythe (Aldershot, 2000), 105–118. On Jews in Byzantine art: E. Revel-Neher, *The Image of the Jew in Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 1992); K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992); L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1999). On anti-Jewish polemics: A. Kuelzer, *Disputationes Graecae Contra Iudaeos: Byzantinischen antijüdischen Dialogliteratur und ihrem Judenbild* (Stuttgart, 1999); V. Déroche, "La polémique anti-judaïque au vi^e et au vii^e siècle, un memento inédit, Les Képhalaia," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 275–311; M. Waegeman, "Les traits *Adversus Iudaeos*. Aspects des relations judéo-chrétiennes dans le monde grec," *Byzantion* 56 (1986): 312–35. On Jews in different documents: Vera von Falkenhausen in this volume.

³ On the need for research on the image of the Jew in Byzantine literature: N. de Lange, "Jews and Christians in the Byzantine Empire: Problems and Prospects," *Studies in Church History: Christianity and Judaism* 29, ed., D. Wood (Oxford, 1992),

However, there is no comprehensive study regarding images of Jews in the Byzantine world chronicles written in Greek from the sixth through the twelfth centuries. Written mainly by churchmen, monks, or imperial officials, these chronicles constitute a major genre of history writing in Byzantium.⁴ Their adaptations and translations influenced the world-view of the Empire and of regions which later accepted Orthodox Christianity, such as Bulgaria and Russia, and even the Latin West.⁵ The relatively small literate public derived much of their knowledge of the past, and hence, to an extent, their view of the present from the world chronicles. As a genre which persisted for centuries displaying certain salient features, world chronicles constitute a major source for ascertaining the attitudes toward and information regarding a variety of topics throughout most of the history of the Byzantine Empire.

The major characteristics of Byzantine world chronicles may be summarized as follows: Most chronicles begin with Creation, conclude

15–32, especially 31–2. While de Lange notes art, hagiography, and polemics, neither he nor subsequent scholars mention chronicles or historiography. On the portrayal of Jews in early Christian historiography: O. Irshai, "Jews and Judaism in Early Church Historiography: The Case of Eusebius of Caesarea (Preliminary Observations and Examples)" in this volume.

⁴ For a detailed discussion of each chronicle and a general essay expressing the traditional disparaging view of the genre as lowbrow and lacking in merit: H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, I (Munich, 1978), 249–441, esp. 257 ff. For a refutation of Hunger's view and a rehabilitation of the chronicles: J. Ljubarskij, "New Trends in the Study of Byzantine Historiography," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993): 131–8; and "Quellenforschung and/or Literary Criticism: Narrative Structures in Byzantine Historical Writing," *Symbolae Osloenses*, 73 (1998): 5–22. On the importance of chronicles in shaping the view of the Byzantine past and present: C. Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (London, 1988), 189–200, and E. Jeffreys, "The Attitudes of Byzantine Chroniclers towards Ancient History," *Byzantion* 49 (1979): 199–238. On the history of chronicle writing: B. Croke and R. Scott, "Byzantine Chronicle Writing," in *Studies in John Malalas*, eds., Jeffreys, Croke and Scott (Sydney, 1990), 27–55. For a comprehensive article on the first Byzantine chronicler, John Malalas: E. Jeffreys, "The Beginnings of Byzantine Chronography: John Malalas," in *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity*, ed., G. Marasco (Leiden, 2003), 497–527. Information on chronicles in this paper derives mainly from the studies mentioned above.

⁵ On the transmission and diffusion of the sixth-century chronicle of John Malalas in Greek, Slavonic, Latin, and Syriac: E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, S. Franklin, J. Stevenson and W. Witakowski, "The Transmission of Malalas' Chronicle," in *Studies in John Malalas*, 245–313. There are over seventeen manuscripts of the ninth-century chronicle of George the Monk which was copied into the sixteenth century and nine of the eleventh-century chronicle of George Kedrenos: Scott, "Byzantine Chronicles Writing," *Studies*, 50.

with their authors' own times and display an Orthodox Christian and pro-Imperial outlook. While a particular emperor may be criticized, chroniclers accept the Roman Empire (pagan and Christian) as a divinely sanctioned institution. The birth, life, and crucifixion of Jesus, the founding of the Roman Empire and its conversion to Christianity under Constantine in the early fourth century constitute turning points in history.⁶ All events from Augustus Caesar on are classified under the Roman emperors during whose reigns they occurred. Chroniclers frequently copy material from earlier world Christian and Byzantine chronicles with a minimum of changes. Despite these common features, individual Byzantine chroniclers display their own predilections, which are evident through the use of different sources and their divergent emphases. For example, the chronicle of John Malalas (565) includes much information on the buildings and landmarks of his town of Antioch, while the anonymous author of the *Chronicon Paschale* (628) devotes much attention to the calendar and the dating of Easter. George the Monk (866/67) states that the purpose of his work is to educate the reader towards Christian piety and therefore includes excerpts from patristic texts and saints' lives.⁷ Furthermore, contemporary events and trends influenced the chroniclers, as will be shown.

Jews appear in all of the Byzantine chronicles,⁸ both as individuals and as a group. Most of the material on Jews may be found in the parts of the chronicles which relate ancient history from the Biblical

⁶ On the importance of the birth of Jesus and the foundation of the Roman Empire as turning points: R. Fishman-Duker, "The Second Temple Period in Byzantine Chronicles," *Byzantion* 47 (1977): 126–56; Mango, *Byzantium*, 198–200; Jeffreys, "Attitudes," 223–8.

⁷ The dates in parentheses are the last year or years of events recorded. On Malalas, buildings, and Antioch: G. Downey, "Imperial Building Records in Malalas," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 38 (1938): 1–15, 299–311; and more recently, A. Moffatt, "A Record of Public Buildings and Monuments," in *Studies in John Malalas*, 87–111. On the *Chronicon Paschale*: J. Beaucamp, "La Chronique Paschale: Le Temps Approprié," in *Le temps chrétien de la fin de l'Antiquité au Moyen Age*, ed., Beaucamp et al. (Paris, 1984), 451–68; and W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (London, 2007), 340–9. On George the Monk: Ljubarskij, "George the Monk as a Short-Story Writer," *Jahrbuch der Oesterreichischen Byzantinistik* (1994): 255–63.

⁸ The following is a list of the editions of chronicles mentioned in this article, in chronological order: Ioannes Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Thurn, CFHB (Berlin, 2000); *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, trans. and ed. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys and R. Scott (Melbourne, 1986).

Chronicon Paschale, v. 1–2, ed. Ludovicus Dindorf, CSHB (Bonn, 1832); *Chronicon Paschale*, 284–628 A.D., trans. and ed. M. Whitby and M. Whitby (Liverpool, 1989).

Patriarchs to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E. Afterwards, most chroniclers note Jews only sporadically.⁹ The exception is Theophanes (813) whose chronicle begins where that of his contemporary George Synkellos ends, with the reign of the Emperor Diocletian (284–305). Although later authors, such as George Kedrenos (1057), begin with Creation, they apparently derive much of their material on the Jews from the fourth to the ninth centuries (and on other subjects) from Theophanes.¹⁰ While there is some variation throughout the corpus of chronicles regarding both the nature and the number of events pertaining to Jews and their place in a given text, it is important to emphasize that the same events, more or less, which are repeated from one work to its successor, comprise the fragmented bits of information relating to the Jews. Unlike the consecutive narrative or lists of personalities in the ancient period, there is nothing bearing the slightest resemblance to a continuum of the history of the Jews in Byzantium.¹¹ In fact, there are often lacunae spanning several decades or even centuries between the isolated items on the Jews. The disparate

Georgius Syncellus, *Ecloga Chronographica*, ed. A. Mosshammer, Teubner (Leipzig, 1984); *The Chronography of George Synkellos*, trans. and ed. W. Adler and P. Tuffin (Oxford, 2002).

Theophanes, *Chronographia*, v. 1–2, ed. Carolus de Boor, Teubner (Leipzig, 1893); *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor*, trans. and ed. C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford, 1997).

Georgius Monachus, *Chronicon Syntomon*, v. 1–2, ed. Carolus de Boor, Teubner (Leipzig, 1904).

Leo Grammaticus, *Chronographia*, ed. Immanuel Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1842).

Georgius Cedrenus, *Synopsis Historion*, v. 1–2, ed. Immanuel Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1838–39).

Ioannes Zonaras, *Epitomé Historiarum*, v. 1–6, ed. Ludovicus Dindorf, Teubner (Leipzig, 1868–75).

Constantine Manasses, *Synopsis Historiké*, ed. O. Lampsidis, CFHB (Athens, 1996).

Michael Glycas, *Biblos Chroniké*, ed. Immanuel Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1836).

Although the authors and titles above appear in their Latin forms, I have used the Greek transliterated spelling for Byzantine authors, chronicles, and other figures, as it is preferred usage at present.

⁹ Fishman-Duker attributes the dearth of material on Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem to Christian bias, “Second Temple,” 154–6.

¹⁰ Scott, *Studies in John Malalas*, 47, correctly regards Kedrenos’s chronicle as “entirely derivatory.”

¹¹ According to Margaret Mullett, “the Other can simply be left out, ignored as happens to Jews in Byzantine historical narratives,” “The ‘Other’ in Byzantium,” *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, 1–22, especially 15–6. While Mullett is correct, in light of the relatively few references to Jews after 70 C.E. and the preponderance of material on the Jews in the ancient period, we must note how and in what contexts Jews appear. Fishman-Duker, “Second Temple,” 154–6.

events conveyed from one chronicle to the next give the reader selective and limited information about Jews during the centuries of Byzantine rule. Taken cumulatively, this material yields several major images of Jews which emerge from the events recorded in the chronicles.

The images may be listed as follows: ancient historical figures of the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E., who appear as sacred ancestors and serve as synchronizers for material on other ancient peoples; crucifiers of Christ, attackers of Christians and Christianity, and instigators or accomplices in encouraging heresy; rioters and rebels against divinely sanctioned authority; voluntary and forced converts to Christianity; and persons possessing knowledge or dupes. An event or an episode which mentions Jews may include more than one of the images. For example, a selection may contain both a positive and a negative image, such as Jews who convert to Christianity and those who deride it; or two negative images, such as rebels against the emperor and murderers of Christians. Only rarely do Jews appear in the chroniclers' recorded continuum of history without fitting into one of the above images. As the images are fairly consistent throughout this long-standing and important literary genre, our brief survey and explanation, accompanied by a selection of examples of the images from the different texts, hopefully will contribute toward a better understanding of the attitudes towards and the place of Jews in Byzantine historiography and society.

The presentation and analysis of images of Jews derive solely from a careful study of the sources—the most recently published critical editions of the chronicles in Greek, and when possible, annotated English translations. There will be neither extensive discussion of the sources of the chronicles nor confirmation or denial of the veracity of the facts recorded by the chroniclers, as this paper focuses on images of Jews, not on reconstruction of the history of Byzantine Jewry. Sources will be noted if they are essential in conveying or shedding light upon a particular image. This exposition does not include lengthy quotations but rather presents the author's conclusions.

II. ANCIENT JEWS: SACRED ANCESTORS AND USEFUL SYNCHRONIZERS

Ancient Jews, before the birth of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., appear as historical figures. Many references derive from the Bible and the Apocrypha. Following patristic teachings, Byzantine

chroniclers regarded ancient Israel and its leaders as precursors of Christianity.¹² Since the Old Testament is holy to the Christian faith, its narrative constitutes *historia sacra*. Indeed, Christianity had co-opted both the people of Israel as a collective and the individual Biblical figures, such as Moses or David, and the Biblical kings, high priests, and prophets.¹³ As chroniclers record a continuous flow of historical facts or lists of successions of rulers or major figures, interrupted by longer narrative passages, they generally do not insert extensive Christian commentary in the course of the continuum.¹⁴

As far as the collective of the Jewish people is concerned, several Byzantine chroniclers follow the third/fourth-century church father and chronicler Eusebius of Caesarea¹⁵ and present a distinction between “Hebrews” and “Jews” in the context of ancient history. For example, they designate the Patriarchs as “Hebrews” and explain the etymology of “Jews” as originating from the tribe of Judah.¹⁶ Byzantine chroniclers, however, even those who recall the origins of these terms, are not fastidious about such distinctions and use the terms “Jews” and “Hebrews” interchangeably for the collective and for individual figures

¹² On the Old Testament and ancient Jews in patristic teachings: M. Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135–425)*, trans. H. McKeating (Oxford, 1986), 65–97, 135–78. In *Byzantium: Mango, Byzantium, 177–97*. For an overview of Biblical history in the chronicles: A. Kuefler, “Die Anfänge des Geschichte: Zur Darstellung des ‘Biblischen Zeitalters’ in der byzantinischen Chronistik,” *BZ* 93 (2000): 138–56. Jeffreys, “The Old Testament in Byzantine Chronicles,” in *The O. T. in Byzantium*, eds., P. Magdalino and R. Nelson (Washington, D.C., 2010), 153–74.

¹³ On co-opting and transforming of ancient Jewish sites and figures into Christian loci and persons: A. Jacobs, *The Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, 2004); D. Satran, *Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine: Reassessing The Lives of the Prophets* (Leiden, 1995).

¹⁴ Major exceptions are the *Chronicon Paschale*, George the Monk, and George Kedrenos. Fishman-Duker, “Second Temple,” 147–50; idem., “Anti-Jewish Arguments in the *Chronicon Paschale*,” in *Contra Iudaeos*, eds., G. Stroumsa and O. Limor (Tübingen, 1996), 105–18; and Beaucamp, et al., “La prologue de la Chronique Paschale,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 7 (1979): 223–301.

¹⁵ On the influence of Eusebius’s chronicle: W. Adler, “Eusebius’ Chronicle and Its Legacy,” in *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism*, eds., H. Attridge and G. Hata (Leiden, 1992), 467–86; and Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, 28–33. On the Christian chronographic tradition: Adler and Tuffin, “Introduction,” *Synkellos*, xxix–xlvi. On Eusebius’s use of the terms “Hebrews” and “Jews”: A. Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism* (Leiden, 2000), 102–110; and G. Harvey, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew, and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden, 1996), and Irshai, “Jews and Judaism in Early Church Historiography,” in this volume, especially note no. 13.

¹⁶ Malalas, 3:3,4 (Jeffreys, 28–29); *Synkellos*, 112, 128 (Adler, *Synkellos*, 140, 159) cites the third-century church father Africanus for the origin of the Hebrews.

throughout the texts.¹⁷ The terms, therefore, are synonymous, and it is clear that contemporary Jews or Hebrews definitely were linked to their physical ancestors, the Jews or Hebrews of the ancient world. Certain personae, such as Moses or Daniel are prominent and receive a special place in all of the texts, even in those which do not refer at length or hardly mention other Biblical figures.

While ancient Jews hold a particular significance as sacred ancestors, they also appear as one of the many peoples of the pre-Imperial, pre-Christian ancient world. Byzantine chroniclers either attempt to synchronize the histories of the different ancient peoples or to separate Biblical, namely, sacred history from other history, such as that of Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, or Romans.¹⁸ The non-sacred pasts of the latter appear with the mention of a figure, such as an Israelite judge, king, or high priest, who lived at the time of the particular story or events of the nation described in the chronicle. In Malalas's chronicle, the Jewish leader serves as a calendar marker, with the Greek or Roman past dominating the lengthier, narrative portion of the work.¹⁹ Hence, the Biblical figure, presumably familiar to the Christian reader, indicates the date of the ancient pagan person or historical event. Not only individuals, but also lists of Jewish judges, kings, or high priests serve as indicators of the passage of time, both with or without their years of reign or the *annus mundi*, synchronized with events or narratives of varying lengths of Jewish or non-Jewish history.²⁰

¹⁷ Synkellos is the most exact in his differentiation. Malalas uses "Jews" in his narrative on Moses (3:11–12; Jeffreys, 31) and mention of David (4:25; Jeffreys, 44), or "Israel" for judges (e.g., Gideon, Thola (4:11, Jeffreys 37). Judith, however, is "a Hebrew woman" (6:14, Jeffreys, 84). The *Chronicon Paschale* lists the high priests of the Persian, Greek, and Hasmonean periods as "Hebrews" (1:356, 15). For later periods, Theophanes refers to both "Jews" and "Hebrews" in the same sentence in his item on the forced conversion of Jews and Montanist heretics in 721/2 (1:401.29–402:4; Mango/Scott, 554–5). The work wrongly attributed to "Leo Grammatikos" notes the conversion of "Hebrews" by Basil I in 873–4 (256:10–13). Constantine Manasses uses "Hebrews" for his reference to the defeat of the Jewish revolt against Hadrian in 135 (2165–71 or 2183–90). The term "Hebrew" is used for the language of a text: George the Monk, I: 2:15 (52:13–54:2). De Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks or Romans?" 105–18.

¹⁸ Fishman-Duker, "Second Temple," 135–41; Kuelzer, "Anfänge der Geschichte," 141–8; Jeffreys, *The O. T. in Byzantine Chronicles*, 163.

¹⁹ For example, Malalas 4:8 (Jeffreys, 35), mention of Gideon as "a leader of Israel" appears before a lengthy narrative on Orpheus (4:8–10; Jeffreys, 35–37); or mention of "the time of David" and the Trojan War, 5:1–69; Jeffreys, 45–69). For similar examples: Jeffreys, "Attitudes," 216–24.

²⁰ Various lists of Jewish judges, kings, and high priests and the rulers of ancient pagan kingdoms, along with years of reign, make up a large part of the *Chronicon Paschale* and Synkellos. On the place of such lists in early Christian and in Byzantine

The same occurs in the opposite case, where a Greek or Egyptian figure precedes a narrative about a Biblical one. This practice apparently derives mainly from Eusebius. Byzantine chroniclers regarded ancient Greek and Roman gods and “mythological” figures as historical personae. Thus, the readers of the chronicle of John Malalas, for example, learned about the history of the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans via its synchronization with the sacred Jewish figures of the past, rather than the opposite way, as in Eusebius’s day.²¹ While chroniclers vary regarding the amount of attention given to Biblical history and that of ancient pagan peoples, it is important to emphasize that the Jews appear in all of the texts and are very much a part of the pre-Christian past.²²

In the sections on ancient history, chroniclers may include material not present in Scripture or narratives which differ from the canonical text. Malalas, for example, presents alternative versions of the stories of Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samson, Daniel, and the Maccabees.²³ It is noteworthy that later chroniclers, who use material from Malalas’s work, do not repeat his versions of *historia sacra* and prefer the traditional Biblical narrative. The *Chronicon Paschale* and the ninth-century chronicle of George Synkellos include material which is not found in the Bible, but relates to Biblical figures or history. For example, the former includes a version of the popular fourth-century tract on the burial places of the Biblical prophets, *The Lives of the Prophets*. And the learned George Synkellos inserts excerpts from the Book of Jubilees, which he calls “the Little Genesis” and from the Books of Enoch, some derived indirectly, via works which are no longer extant.²⁴ Despite these insertions, both the *Chronicon Paschale* and Synkellos

chronicles: Heinrich Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie* (Leipzig, 1880–98).

²¹ Adler, “Eusebius’ Chronicle, 471–474,” Kofsky, *Eusebius*, 100–18.

²² Malalas and Constantine Manasses (d. 1187) devote much more space to ancient Greece, while George the Monk leaves out most of the Greco-Roman tradition (Jeffreys, “Attitudes,”; Scott, *Studies in John Malalas*, 45–46), due to his didactic Christian purposes (Ljubarskij, “George the Monk”).

²³ “Alternative” Biblical narratives in Malalas: Joseph (3:8; Jeffreys, 29); Moses (3:12–4; Jeffreys, 31–2); Joshua, who changes the name of Shechem to Neapolis (4:2; Jeffreys, 33); Samson (4:17; Jeffreys, 39); Daniel (6:3,7,9; Jeffreys, 80–4); and the Maccabees (8:22–4; Jeffreys, 108–9). On the latter: Elie Bikerman [sic.], “Les Maccabées de Malalas,” *Byzantion* 21 (1951): 63–83.

²⁴ *Chronicon Paschale*, 1:274–302; Adler, “Synkellos’ Sources and Originality,” *Synkellos*, lx–lxix. On Synkellos: I. Sevcenko, “The Search for the Past in Byzantium around the Year 800,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992): 279–93.

generally remain faithful to Scripture as far as content and chronology are concerned and include quotations from the Bible. George the Monk and Kedrenos generally follow the Biblical narrative, with the addition of commentaries by Church Fathers, such as John Chrysostom, while John Zonaras (1118) includes much material from Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*.²⁵

Images of ancient Jews are generally positive if they appear so in Scripture. Negative characteristics of individual Biblical figures or of ancient Israelites as a collective do not receive much emphasis or judgmental comment, with the exception of the occasional remark of a Christian nature, which will be noted in the discussion of the next category of images. Furthermore, Biblical rulers may serve as role models for emperors. For example, Theophanes, whose chronicle does not include the Biblical past, compares the Emperor Constantine to David and his rival Maxentius, who was thrown into the river with his troops, to Pharaoh. Later, the Patriarch Germanos who opposed Emperor Leo III's "abominable error" of iconoclasm compares himself to Jonah.²⁶ Verses and phrases from Psalms, the most popular book of the Bible and a major liturgical text, also occur in parts of chronicles and not in their original Biblical context. Perhaps, if the chronicles had ended with Jesus, the reader would have emerged with a positive view of Jews.²⁷ From Jesus onward, however, images of Jews are quite different.

III. CRUCIFIERS OF CHRIST, ATTACKERS OF CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY, AND INSTIGATORS OF HERESY

Byzantine chroniclers follow the patristic teachings of supersession, although most do not emphasize doctrine and theology because of the nature of the literary genre. Therefore, Jews appear as crucifiers

²⁵ Fishman-Duker, "Second Temple," 147–53; Kuelzer, "Anfänge der Geschichte," 148–52.

²⁶ Theophanes, 1:9:26; 14:8–1; 409:7–10 (Mango/Scott, 13, 23, 565). On Constantine: Scott, "The Image of Constantine in Malalas and Theophanes," in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, Fourth to Thirteenth Centuries*, ed., P. Magdalino (Aldershot, 1994), 57–71; on Basil I: Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 173–200; on Leo VI: S. Tougher, "The Wisdom of Leo VI," *New Constantines*, especially 173–9. On Biblical role models for Byzantine emperors: G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003), 50, *passim*.

²⁷ A comparison of ancient Biblical Jews in the chronicles and their depiction in art would be a worthwhile contribution. Revel-Neher, *The Image of the Jew in Byzantine Art*, does not note chronicles.

of Christ and enemies of Orthodox Christianity.²⁸ The Jewish role in the crucifixion appears both in the historical context and at different junctures in the texts. Furthermore, Jews emerge as perpetrators of violent attacks against Christians either during riots or revolts against the Empire, or simply as attackers of Christians.²⁹ Jews also commit acts or express themselves against the Christian religion. In addition, the Jews' disdain for Christianity may be found in the continuous links between Jews and various groups of heretical Christians and the role of Jews in encouraging Emperor Leo III to adopt Iconoclasm.³⁰ Byzantine chronicles, therefore, present Jews in intrinsically and historically anti-Christian roles, as eternal outsiders in Orthodox Christian society.

For the chroniclers, the advent of Jesus, its proximity in time to the establishment of the Roman Empire, and the eventual conversion of the Empire to Christianity were the central events of human history, which was proceeding towards the Second Coming of Jesus.³¹ For the most part, the chroniclers take the triumph of Christianity and the victory of Orthodoxy for granted, despite the emergence of Islam and its conquest of much of the Empire, including the Holy Land, and internal political and religious struggles.

Several common features emerge in the treatment of the life and death of Jesus. The Jewish identity of Jesus is regarded as an historical fact; his Davidic lineage as truth from Scripture. In the sections

²⁸ While the deicide charge finds expression in the hymn *Peri Pascha* by Melito of Sardis as early as the second century, during the fourth century, with the conversion of Constantine, anti-Jewish attitudes and legislation became firmly entrenched in the Roman Empire: D. Satran, "Anti-Jewish Polemic in the *Peri Pascha* of Melito of Sardis: The Problem of Social Context," *Contra Iudaeos*, 49–58; G. Stroumsa, "From Anti-Judaism to Antisemitism in Early Christianity?" *Contra Iudaeos*, 1–26; and J. Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (London, 1934); and Simon, *Verus Israel*.

²⁹ On Jewish violence against Christians throughout history, particularly its treatment in modern Jewish scholarly works: E. Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton, 2006). Horowitz seems to give too much credence to Theophanes and does not pay attention to the *Chronicon Paschale*, written closer to the events.

³⁰ On the literary link between Jews and heretics: Av. Cameron, "Jews and Heretics: A Category Error?" in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds., A. Becker and A. Reed (Tübingen, 2003), 345–60; on the Jews and Iconoclasm: A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry: From Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (New York, 1971), 61–81.

³¹ Mango, *Byzantium*, 201–217; Jeffreys, "Malalas' Use of the Past," in *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, ed. G. Clarke, et al. (Rushcutters Bay, 1990), 121–61; and Irshai, "Dating the Eschaton: Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Calculations in Late Antiquity," in *Apocalyptic Time*, ed., A. Baumgarten (Leiden, 2000).

on Jesus, Jews play roles similar to those in the Gospels. They make up the crowd that listens to his preaching, witnesses the miracles, and receives him as Messiah. Jews also constitute the men of the establishment—the Herodian aristocracy, the Sanhedrin, the priests, and the Pharisees—who reject him, instigate the people against him, and eventually hand him to the Romans for trial. All of the authors refer to those authorities and leaders as Jews. They note the agitation against Jesus, the harassment of his disciples and of the apostles, and the Jewish role in the Crucifixion with varying degrees of emphasis and attention. For example, Malalas and the *Chronicon Paschale* state: “as recorded truly in the sacred scripture, so that the Jews said ‘in truth he whom we crucified was the son of God.’”³²

Furthermore, adhering to patristic teachings, in the sections under the Emperor Vespasian, many chroniclers recall the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple, which took place during his reign, as punishment for the crucifixion of Jesus.³³ At this juncture, the ninth-century chronicler George the Monk inserts sections of the anti-Judaizing homilies of the popular fourth-century Church Father John Chrysostom in order to reinforce this argument.³⁴ The depiction of the Jews as guilty of crucifying Jesus and as punished for their crime several decades later presents a composite negative image of Jews as both perpetrators of evil and as victims of their crime, whose suffering is both deserved and justified.

The image of the Jew crucifying Jesus and rejecting Christianity also occurs in contexts which are connected neither to Jesus, his disciples,

³² The following blame the Jews for the Crucifixion: Malalas, 10:14; Jeffreys, 128; *Chronicon Paschale*, 1:411,8–10, 19–22; 413, 5–10; George the Monk, 1:8:3, 317, 7–318, 20; Kedrenos, 1:175, 307, 13–22; Constantine Manasses, 1975–1978 [1980–85]. Synkellos notes that the calamities of the Jews date from the Crucifixion, 394, 21–22; Adler, 472. Zonaras and “Leo Grammatikos” do not blame the Jews.

³³ The destruction of Jerusalem as punishment for the Crucifixion: Malalas, 10:45; Jeffreys, 138; *Chronicon Paschale*, 1:461, 21–462, 7; Synkellos, 417, 1–8; Adler, 493–4. All three cite Eusebius. George the Monk 2:8:10, 401, 11–403, 15; Kedrenos, 1:213, 374, 7–376, 5. There are no links to the Crucifixion in the works of Zonaras, Leo Grammatikos, and Constantine Manasses.

³⁴ George the Monk 1:8:3, 312, 11–314, 22. John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople (398–404) delivered his famous eight homilies against Judaizing Christians in Antioch in 387. Chrysostom was probably the most popular of the Greek Church Fathers. There are over 2000 manuscripts of his works, which were quoted throughout the centuries (“John Chrysostom,” *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford, 1991) II, 1057–8. See the article by Patrick Andrist in this volume. On Chrysostom’s views and influence: Simon, *Verus Israel*, 306–38.

and the apostles Peter and Paul nor to the destruction of Jerusalem. For example, the anonymous author of the seventh-century *Chronicon Paschale* compares the Persian King Choesroes II, whose forces conquered Jerusalem and destroyed its churches in 614, to Judas Iscariot and repeats that Jesus “born of Mary was crucified by the Jews.”³⁵ The ninth-century George Synkellos, who does not insert extensive anti-Jewish citations from Church Fathers, states that Lamech, the descendant of Cain, is “a type of the Jewish people, the slayers of the Lord, who crucified the Saviour.”³⁶ The twelfth-century chronicler Michael Glykas compares the punishment of the Jews who crucified Christ to Cain as both wander the earth.³⁷ Such statements reinforce a negative portrayal of Jews and may reflect an embedded antagonism prevalent in Byzantine society which was consistent with Orthodox Christianity.³⁸

The images of Jews as crucifiers and deniers of Christ which appear in all of the chronicles derive from a variety of sources. For example, Malalas introduces material based on the *Acts of Pilate*, a popular fourth-century book of New Testament Apocrypha which exonerates the Roman prefect of guilt for sentencing Jesus to death and portrays him favorably.³⁹ The author of the *Chronicon Paschale* uses lists from earlier chronicles and features lists of Roman consuls, the *Fasti Sicculi*, and many quotations from Scripture.⁴⁰ We have noted that George the Monk includes excerpts from the anti-Judaizing sermons of John Chrysostom. The different sources used in the narratives on Jesus indicate the foci of the different chroniclers, which emerge in their treatments of other subjects. In conclusion, however, their presentations of the material generally convey an image of Jews who are guilty of deicide.

Jews also appear as perpetrators of violent attacks against Christians and as detractors of the Christian religion, in the case of the killing

³⁵ *Chronicon Paschale*, 1:729, 6–7; Whitby and Whitby, 183.

³⁶ Synkellos, 9,6–8; Adler, 12.

³⁷ Michael Glykas, *Biblos Chroniké*, 224, 10–16. For a summary of Glykas’s polemic against the Jews: Kuelzer, *Disputationes Graecae*, 189–192. On anti-Jewish arguments in Glykas’s *Theological Chapters*: Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993), 372–86.

³⁸ On embedded anti-Jewish bias: De Lange, “Jews and Christians in the Byzantine Empire,” 24–7; Av. Cameron, “Byzantines and Jews,” 249–74.

³⁹ Malalas 10:14; Jeffreys, 127–28. This depiction suits Malalas’s view of a good Roman officialdom, as the Roman emperor eventually would become Christian vs. bad Jews, guilty of the Crucifixion.

⁴⁰ *Chronicon Paschale*, 1:362–429; Fishman-Duker, “Anti-Jewish Arguments,” 112–4.

of Stephen and the incitement against the apostles. Physical violence, including murder and mutilation of corpses, is recalled as a malevolent act against Christian individuals or groups during wars, revolts, and periods of unrest, which include Jewish attacks against Christians.⁴¹ It is the ninth-century chronicler Theophanes, however, who includes several instances of Jewish violence against Christians. For example, he notes that Jews slaughtered Christians in Alexandria in 412–413, and tortured and hanged a Christian boy at Immon (Inmestar) in 415.⁴² These incidents do not appear in the works of George the Monk, “Leo Grammatikos,” John Zonaras, or Constantine Manasses.

In addition to the above examples, Jewish violence against Christians also forms part of a composite image in which Jews appear as rebels against imperial authority or civil disturbers. Such is the case of the rioters in Antioch in 608 or 609 who murder the patriarch, attack Christians, and insult Christianity.⁴³ In several instances, Jews do not appear to be acting alone but are joined by others, such as Samaritans in 529 and 555, or by the Persian conquerors in the case of the Persian conquest of Jerusalem in 614.⁴⁴ An exception is the seventh-century *Chronicon Paschale* which does not mention Jewish participation in the Samaritan revolts under Justinian, the riots in Antioch in 608 or

⁴¹ See note 29; Av. Cameron, “Blaming the Jews: The Seventh-Century Invasions of Palestine in Context,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (2002): 57–78 argues that accusations of Jewish violence against Christians “most often takes the form of stock allegations against Jews... and that Jews and Judaism constitute themes which are exploited so as to play a defining role in Christian theological formulations,” 78. Cameron, however, does not cite the *Chronicon Paschale* which, unlike Theophanes, does not “blame the Jews” for the massacre of Jerusalem’s Christians in 614.

⁴² Theophanes, 1:81:30–82:3, Mango/Scott, 127; Kedrenos, 1:336, 589, 14–20 (Alexandria); Theophanes, 1:83:10–14, Mango/Scott, 129; Kedrenos, 1:336, 590, 3–6 (Immon).

⁴³ Theophanes, 1:296:15–297:10, Mango/Scott, 425–6; Kedrenos, 1:406, 712, 9–713, 13; Zonaras, III, 14:14 (302) on Antioch in 608. G. Dagron and V. Déroche, “Juifs et chrétiens dans l’Orient du vii^e siècle: Introduction Historique,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 19–22, date the violence in Antioch in 609.

⁴⁴ On the chroniclers’ treatment of the Jewish role in the Samaritan revolts against Justinian: Y. Dan, “On Jewish-Samaritan Relations in Late Byzantine Palestine,” *Zion* 41 (1981): 67–76, reprinted in: *Studies in the History of Palestine in the Roman-Byzantine Period*, ed., O. Irshai (Jerusalem, 2006), 11–21, especially 14–19 (Hebrew). For the Samaritan revolts, see entries under John Malalas, *Chronicon Paschale*, Theophanes the Confessor, George Cedrenus: R. Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism* (Tübingen, 2002). Yaron Dan doubted Jewish participation in the Samaritan revolts. On the alleged massacre of 90,000 Christians by Jews during the Persian invasion of Jerusalem: Theophanes 1:300, 30–301, 5, Mango/Scott, 431; Kedrenos, 1:408, 715, 7–15; Leo Grammatikos 148, 12–16; Zonaras, III:14:15 (307). See note 29; Dagron and Déroche, *op. cit.*, 20–5.

609, or any Jewish collaboration with the Persians in the massacre of Christians in Jerusalem in 614. Unlike Theophanes, the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* does not accuse these Jews of sedition or anti-Christian violence or vengeance.⁴⁵ Kedrenos and Zonaras apparently gleaned from Theophanes, and not the *Chronicon Paschale*, which was rarely used, since their works convey the more prevalent negative image of violent, anti-Christian Jews.

Furthermore, Jews are associated with Christian heresies and heretics. Hence, they appear as enemies of Imperial Orthodoxy. For example, in the dialogue of the Circus Factions prior to the Nika riots in Constantinople in 532, Theophanes refers to the use of the epithets “Jew” and “Samaritan” as insults leveled at the Green Monophysite group.⁴⁶ Moreover, Jews are associated with specific Christian heresies as well. For example, the *Chronicon Paschale* refers to heretical works as “Jewish writings” and links the Jews with Nestorians, while Theophanes, Kedrenos, and “Leo Grammatikos” link the forced conversion of the Jews by Leo III to that of the Montanists.⁴⁷ From Theophanes on, Jewish advisers appear as those who are ultimately responsible for the adoption of Iconoclasm by Emperor Leo III in 727.⁴⁸ Therefore, Jews are guilty of Iconoclasm’s double sin of desecration of icons: blasphemy against Orthodox Christianity, and by implication, the persecution of iconophiles, namely Orthodox Christians. The alleged Jewish role in promoting Iconoclasm is repeated in all of the later chronicles, including that of the twelfth-century Constantine Manasses, whose only reference to Jews after their defeat by Hadrian in 135 is their role in initiating Iconoclasm.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Chronicon Paschale*, 1:619, 14–21 (Samaritans); 669, 16–19 (Antioch); 704, 13–18 (Persians); Whitby & Whitby, 111, 149–150, 156 and notes; Dagron and Déroche, *op. cit.*, 20–1.

⁴⁶ Theophanes, 1:181:35–182:25, Mango/Scott 276–277 and notes. Malalas 15:15 (Jeffreys, 218–219) describes the Monophysite Green circus faction as murdering Jews in Antioch in 490. Theophanes relates that the Orthodox Blues associated Greens with Jews. On Jews and circus factions: A. Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976), 149–152; on Theophanes’s “circus dialogue,” 318–33.

⁴⁷ *Chronicon Paschale* 1:635, 13–15; Whitby and Whitby, 133 (Nestorians); Theophanes, 1:401: 21–25, Mango/Scott, 554–5; Kedrenos, 1:453, 793:12–17 (Montanists).

⁴⁸ Theophanes, 1:401:29–402:4, Mango/Scott, 555–556; Kedrenos 1:450, 788, 1–789, 13; Leo Grammatikos, 173, 17–175, 1; Zonaras, III:15:3 (339). George the Monk 2:9:33, 735ff. attributes the emperor’s adoption of Iconoclasm to a consultation with Jewish lads.

⁴⁹ Constantine Manasses, 4140–4160 (4206–4224).

Moreover, Jews may influence others, such as Muslims, to act against the Christians or the Christian faith. Theophanes recalls that the Jews, "Christ's enemies," recommend that Caliph Umar remove crosses from buildings in Jerusalem,⁵⁰ and notes the display of Jewish hatred toward Christianity by forcibly converted Jews who eat before partaking of the Eucharist.⁵¹ George the Monk's narratives on Jews who voluntarily become Christians also mention Jews who voice their hostility towards Christianity and Christians.⁵² In conclusion, negative images of Jews as haters of Christianity, collaborators with non-Christians against Christians, and propagators of heresy are present throughout the chronicles.

IV. RIOTERS AND REBELS AGAINST DIVINELY SANCTIONED AUTHORITY

Jews appear as rioters, instigators of public disturbances, and rebels against the sole legitimate rule on earth, namely the Roman emperor whose authority derives from divine will. Therefore, all subjects must obey him. Revolts are viewed not only as *lèse majesté* but also as a sin against the divine world order and its representative, the emperor (and by extension, imperial officials and appointees), who embodies the divinely designated temporal authority and the manifestation of Christian political supremacy.⁵³ Disturbances and revolts against the emperor and his officials or against figures of the church on the local level are described either as part of planned initiatives, such as the Samaritan revolt against Justinian, or the collaboration with the Persians in 614, or outbursts such as the riots in Antioch in 608. These outbursts, described above, involve violent actions specifically directed against Christians as well as against imperial authority.

It is noteworthy that Jews appear as rebels or fomenters of trouble against legitimate authority even under pre-Christian, that is, pagan Roman emperors. Such events include the Great Revolt (66–70 C.E.) and the rebellion during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian (132–135).

⁵⁰ Theophanes, 1:342:21–25, Mango/Scott, 476. Kedrenos 1:431, 754, 15–20.

⁵¹ See note 46.

⁵² For example: George the Monk, 2:9:18, 654:19–656:11.

⁵³ Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, *passim*; Mango, *Byzantium*, 189–200; Jeffreys, "Attitudes," 223–8. Malalas even notes pagan emperors such as Vespasian as "most sacred," (10:44; Jeffreys, 137).

Jews receive suitable punishment for these revolts.⁵⁴ Malalas inserts a relatively detailed section on Jewish riots in Antioch during the reign of Gaius Caligula (37–41) which spread beyond the borders of the city.⁵⁵ In fact, in Malalas's chronicle, cases of Jewish insubordination even antedate the establishment of the Roman Empire. For example, in his unique version of the story of the Maccabees, the Jews are punished for the revolt against Antiochus IV and do not emerge as the venerated martyrs or heroes of the Apocrypha.⁵⁶ Thus, in this mid-sixth century chronicle, the image of the Jew as rebel has historical, pre-Imperial roots and it persists in later periods. After Constantine, the image of Jews as rioters or rebels against Christian/Roman authority may form part of a composite image as the enemy of Christ and Christianity and a disturber of social and political order.

Like all rebels against legitimate authority, Jews receive well-deserved punishment for the sin of their revolts and riots. The consequences of such acts include the inevitable failure of the rebellions and disturbances and the death, injury, defeat, and humiliation of their Jewish perpetrators. We have noted the examples of the revolts in Judea in the first and second centuries. Later on, Theophanes mentions a revolt of the Jews in Palestine in 351 which results in the destruction of "their whole race" and "their city Diocaesaria."⁵⁷ Hence, the composite negative image of the Jews as both treasonous rebels and recipients of justified punishments for their evil deeds. Although other peoples revolt against the Empire, only Jews (and to a lesser degree and briefly, the Samaritans) seem to bear the brunt of repeated anti-Christian and anti-Imperial accusations.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Fishman-Duker, "Second Temple," and idem., "The Bar Kochva Rebellion in Christian Sources," in *The Bar Kochva Revolt: A New Approach*, eds., A. Oppenheimer and U. Rappaport (Jerusalem, 1984) 233–42 (Hebrew).

⁵⁵ Malalas 10:20, Jeffreys, 130.

⁵⁶ Malalas 8:22, Jeffreys, 108–9; Bikerman, *op. cit.*, attributes the account to a source based on a Seleucid version of the revolt.

⁵⁷ Theophanes, 1:40, 20–3; Kedrenos, 1:299, 524, 11–21.

⁵⁸ This tendency increases after the Persian and Arab invasions. Dagron and Déroche, "Juifs et chrétiens dans l'Orient de vii^e siècle," and especially Av. Cameron, "Blaming the Jews," and Déroche, "Polemique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'Islam," *Revue des études byzantines* 57 (1999): 141–99.

V. CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY

Jews who convert to Christianity are favorable figures. The chronicles include conversions of individuals and of groups of Jews. Conversions of individuals take place either following miracles, such as a cure of illness or an escape from death, which may occur as the result of an encounter with a holy man who heals or rescues the desperate Jew. The saint convinces the Jew by personal example or by eloquent persuasion that Christianity is indeed the true faith. For example, the story of Attikos, bishop of Constantinople in 409–410, who admonishes, heals, and baptizes a paralytic Jew appears in several texts.⁵⁹ The ninth-century chronicler George the Monk incorporates several selections from the popular hagiographical anthology entitled *The Spiritual Meadow*, written by John Moschos in Byzantine Palestine in ca. 600. Although in the source, holy men are monks in the Judean desert, George the Monk places these stories at different locations and in different times. It is not clear how or why these accounts are inserted at the particular point in the chronicle.⁶⁰ The inclusion of these vignettes suits the purpose of his work of instructing the reader in Christianity. In all of these accounts, the Jew who converts to Christianity appears as good, faithful, and saintly, even prior to his conversion. He has Christian friends and companions who help him. Occasionally, the good, believing convert struggles against his former co-religionists and family members. He comes to the truth on his own or as a result of seeing the light after an encounter with miraculous or sacred or pious good Christians. The convert contrasts with the malevolent Jews. His devotion to the new faith is noted favorably. Even as early as Malalas's chronicle, such expressions of adherence to the new "true" faith occur during the first century when a woman, miraculously healed, dedicates

⁵⁹ Theophanes, 1:81, 16–19; Mango/Scott, 125; George the Monk, 2:9:10, 605, 6–9; Kedrenos, 1:335, 587, 15–19; Zonaras, III: 13:22 (237). The *Chronicon Paschale* relates the tale of the pious Eugenius who proved the truth of Christianity when challenged by a Jew by eating a serpent and remaining alive. The Jew subsequently converted (1:536, Whitby & Whitby, 27). For the conversion of the wealthy Jew, Benjamin of Tiberias in 628 through the persuasion of the Emperor Heraclius: Theophanes, 1:328, 15–22. On conversion: Dagron, "Judäiser," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 359–80.

⁶⁰ On the hagiographical and literary context of George the Monk's conversion stories, Ljubarskij, "George the Monk," 260–263. George the Monk, 2:9:18, 654, 19–656, 11; Kedrenos 1:392, 686,22–688, 2; George the Monk 2:461,19–463,19.

a statue to Christ in Paneum (Caesarea Philippi).⁶¹ In the chronicles, the Jew who finds the way to Christianity is often a good person from the outset and is destined to adopt the true faith. He is neither inherently evil nor demonic. Persuasion, example, or a miraculous event may bring about his conversion.

Mass conversions of groups of Jews occur as a result of a decree, such as that of Leo III in 721/2 or Basil I in 873. These new Christians are neither as devout nor as sincere as individual converts. For example, Theophanes relates that in 721, Leo III forced the Jews and the Montanists to accept Orthodox Christianity and the Jews were baptized against their will "and then washed off their baptism."⁶² In the case of Basil, the Jews are persuaded to become Christians through generous gifts.⁶³ For the most part, however, the image of the convert is a positive one. He is a good Jew. The forced converts whose sincerity is suspect form a negative image.

VI. POSSESSORS OF KNOWLEDGE AND DUPES

In addition to the major images described above, there are two minor ones, which appear less frequently in Byzantine chronicles. Interestingly, they contradict each other and may be considered as opposites: the figure of the Jew as possessor of knowledge or authority and that of Jews as dupes who suffer because of their foolishness. The image of the Jew as one who possesses sole knowledge of an important secret is much more prevalent in the Latin West.⁶⁴ The Byzantine chroniclers "Leo Grammatikos" and Kedrenos relate that a Jewess possesses sole knowledge of the location of the Virgin Mary's robe, a relic sacred to Christians.⁶⁵ Perhaps a variation on the theme of a Jew who possesses knowledge is the Jew as an adviser to the emperor. In this instance,

⁶¹ Malalas 10:12, Jeffreys, 126–7.

⁶² See note 46.

⁶³ Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, 95:341, 9–342, 7; Kedrenos, 589, 241, 22–242, 2; Leo Grammatikos, 256, 10–12; Zonaras, IV: 16:10 (35).

⁶⁴ O. Limor, "Christian Tradition, Jewish Authority," *Cathedra* 80 (June 1996): 31–62 (Hebrew), contends that the Western, Latin sources on wise Jews may derive from Eastern traditions.

⁶⁵ Kedrenos, 2, 614; Leo Grammatikos, 114, on Jewish knowledge of the location of the shroud of the Virgin Mary. Limor, *op. cit.*, 48–9; Kedrenos 2,494,5–495,11 and Zonaras III:2: 1–19 combine two images in an account in which wise Jews convert to Christianity after witnessing a miracle performed by Saint Sylvester.

Jews give bad advice which leads the emperor to heresy, as in the case of Iconoclasm, as we have noted above, or point out the location of crosses on buildings in Jerusalem to the Caliph Umar, who proceeds to tear them down.⁶⁶ Hence, the wise Jew may play either a positive or a negative role.

Jews also appear as a victim of stubbornness, obtuseness, and stupidity. They are fooled by Muhammad and become Muslim, or follow a false Messiah, or are murdered by the Greens in Antioch.⁶⁷ The attempt by the pagan Emperor Julian to rebuild the Temple of the Jews in Jerusalem concludes with an earthquake and subsequent fires.⁶⁸ In these cases, Jews suffer the consequences of their errors of judgment. They are passive and thus differ from Jews who are punished because of their participation in riots and revolts against the Empire or in anti-Christian activities.

Jews also appear in the material classified under Roman or Byzantine emperors simply as a group among the other ethnic groups in the Empire and as suffering, along with Christians, from disabilities imposed by the Caliph.⁶⁹ This type of notice which mentions Jews along with other peoples is rare and does not mitigate the cumulative effect of the mainly negative items on the Jews elsewhere in the texts.

⁶⁶ On Iconoclasm, see note 47; on the crosses, note 50. Limor, "Christian Sacred Space and the Jews," in *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*, ed., J. Cohen (Weisbaden, 1996), 55–77, especially 72–3.

⁶⁷ Theophanes, 1:333,1–12, Mango/Scott, 464 (Jews think Muhammad is the messiah, convert to Islam, become disaffected but remain Muslims and teach Muslims anti-Christian ideas—a combination of two images); Theophanes, 1:40, 19–20; Kedrenos 1:453, 793, 10–2 (Jews are deceived by a Syrian false Messiah); Malalas 15:15, Jeffreys, 138–9 (On hearing that the Greens of Antioch murdered Jews and burned their corpses, the Emperor Zeno asks: 'Why did they burn only the corpses of the Jews? They ought to have burned live Jews too.') The latter clearly expresses an extremely negative view of Jews.

⁶⁸ Theophanes 1:52; Mango/Scott, 81–82; Kedrenos 1:300, 525–526; Zonaras, III: 13:12(62); George the Monk 2:9, 3, 543,8–544,8. Both Theophanes and Kedrenos refer to the Jews as "unbelieving." Malalas, *Chronicon Paschale* and "Leo Grammatikos" do not include an account of the Emperor Julian's failed attempt to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem in 362.

⁶⁹ Theophanes 1:446, 21–26; Mango/Scott, 616 (Both Jews and Christians have marks on their hands); 1:452, 27–29, Mango/Scott, 624 (Jews and Christians are forced to become Muslims. Christian women demonstrate their piety through martyrdom. Apparently Jewesses did not do so.)

VII. CONCLUSION

By and large, images of Jews in Byzantine chronicles tend to be negative, with the exceptions of their depiction in the ancient period before Jesus and the accounts of sincere converts to Christianity. The overall negative impression is reinforced by the fact that Jews are not mentioned in most of the texts for long periods of time except in their capacity as enemies of Christianity and perpetrators of violent revolts against the Empire, for which they receive the punishment which they deserve. Hence, we may conclude that Byzantine chroniclers generally present unfavorable images of post-Biblical Jews. It must be recalled that as Orthodox Christians, chroniclers were heirs to the positions of the Church Fathers, which were repeated in sermons and tracts of leading Byzantine churchmen, such as Maximos the Confessor (seventh century) and the Patriarch Photios (ninth century).⁷⁰ From the fourth century, humiliating Imperial laws, albeit sporadically enforced, provided visible proof of patristic anti-Jewish teachings.⁷¹ Jews were granted Imperial protection and usually allowed to practice their religion. Forcible conversions were rare. Images of Jews in the chronicles, therefore, always must be considered with this background in mind.

Despite the overall negative tone, it must be noted that the chronicles differ with each other. For example, the ninth-century chronicles of Theophanes and George the Monk and the eleventh-century Kedrenos who borrows heavily from both are clearly the most negative of the chroniclers. In contrast, the twelfth-century John Zonaras is much more straightforward and neutral. Such variation comes from the individual predilections of the different chroniclers.

The effects of Islamic expansion and conquest of substantial parts of the Empire, Arab attacks on Byzantine territory, and the iconoclastic controversies have been suggested as the reasons for the increase in

⁷⁰ On Maximos: C. Laga, "Judaism and Jews in Maximus Confessor's Works: Theoretical Controversy and Practical Attitude," *Byzantinoslavica* 51 (1990): 177-88; on Photios: A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 85-6; C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople* (Cambridge, 1958).

⁷¹ Stroumsa, "From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism." For imperial legislation: A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, 1987). On the reinforcement of humiliating legislation at the Imperial Council of Trullo in 692 and subsequent Byzantine law books: S. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1960), III, 174-90.

anti-Jewish expression in the ninth century.⁷² For some, these existential crises seem to have strengthened alleged historical proof of Jewish malevolence, with the Jews possibly serving as a type of surrogate for the powerful and triumphant Muslims.⁷³ While this hypothesis may be applied with possible success in the case of government policies, art, or church sermons, it is not entirely valid regarding the chronicles. For not only Theophanes, George the Monk, and Kedrenos present few and negative images of the Jews, but the *Chronographia* of Malalas and the *Chronicon Paschale*, which antedate the emergence of Islam and Iconoclasm hardly refer to post first-century Jews, and their few references tend to be negative. Indeed, despite Malalas's extensive treatment of Justinian, whose reign was characterized by a pro-Orthodox, anti-"heretical" and anti-Jewish policy, the chronicle is silent on Jews of that time.⁷⁴

It is tempting to explain the silence or paucity of statements regarding post-Biblical Jews as a sign that Jews simply were one of the many ethnic groups of the Byzantine Empire, whose language and life-style were not very different from their Christian neighbors. The chronicles, however, contain hardly any statements in which Jews appear in a neutral manner or as fellow victims of Muslim policies, along with their Christian neighbors. In fact, there is no evidence of an "us" versus "them" situation, in which Jews emerge as part of a united front of Byzantine Jews and Christians against a common enemy.⁷⁵ Therefore, it is clear that the chroniclers' sin of omission is in fact a sin of commission. The teachings of Christian supersession maintain that the Jews after 70 C.E. were an accursed anomaly, punished because they were witnesses to the advent of Christ, but rejected and killed him.

⁷² See note 57.

⁷³ This theory has been proposed by D. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia, 1994); and Corrigan, *Visual Polemics*, and is refuted vehemently by Déroche, "Polemique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'Islam." According to Cameron, "Byzantines and Jews," in light of patristic anti-Judaism, the literary attacks against Jews and Judaism were indeed against Jews, and not against Muslims.

⁷⁴ This fact is pointed out by Scott, "Malalas, *The Secret History*, and Justinian's Propaganda," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 39 (1985): 99-109. On Jews during Justinian's reign: A. Rabello, *Giustiniano, Ebrei e Samaritani alla luce delle fonti storico-letterarie, ecclesiastiche e giuridiche* (Milan, 1987). On legislation: Linder, *op. cit.*, 46-53, 356-411; de Lange, "Jews in the Age of Justinian," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed., M. Maas (Cambridge, 2005), 401-26.

⁷⁵ This idea has been proposed in the article by Robert (Reuven) Bonfil in this volume.

Hence, the chroniclers' silence may well be an expression of a fundamentally anti-Jewish position.⁷⁶ Furthermore, we have shown that Byzantine Jews usually appear negatively in the chronicles. The recurrence of the same negative images and the relative paucity of positive or neutral ones speak for themselves.

To be sure, Byzantine chroniclers did not demonize Jews in the manner of Latin Western European writers both before and particularly during the period of the Crusades and afterwards.⁷⁷ In addition, Revel-Neher has argued that, for the most part, images of Jews in Byzantine art are neither as hideous nor as diabolical as they are in Western European art.⁷⁸ The images of Jews in the chronicles do corroborate those found in the vast corpus of Greek and other Eastern Christian literature, such as polemics, sermons, Biblical commentaries, and hagiography.⁷⁹ Indeed, these largely negative images of Jews in the chronicles are a persistent feature of Byzantine historiography and a constant reminder to their copyists, translators, and readers of the triumph of Orthodox Christianity and the Empire of New Rome.

⁷⁶ Similarly, M. Goodman, "Ignoring the Transformation of the Empire: Palestinian Rabbis and the Conversion of Constantine," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed., P. Schaefer (Tübingen, 2000) 2, 1–9, argues that Rabbinic silence about the conversion of the emperor may be explained by rabbinic hostility. I am grateful to Oded Irshai for this reference. Irshai, "Confronting a Christian Empire," in *Cultures of the Jews*, ed., D. Biale (New York, 2002), 184–5, note no. 16.

⁷⁷ On images of Jews in medieval Western Europe: J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, 1999); and S. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews, XI: Citizen or Alien Conjurer* (New York, 1967).

⁷⁸ Revel-Neher, especially, 95–113. Ninth-century Byzantine manuscripts, however, display definite anti-Jewish stereotypes in both Old and New Testament contexts. See: Corrigan, *Visual Polemics*, 27–76, and Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning, passim*, especially 262–80.

⁷⁹ On Jews in Syriac literature: A. Hayman, "The Image of the Jew in the Syriac Anti-Jewish Polemical Literature," in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, ed., J. Neusner and E. Frerichs (Chico, 1985), 423–42.

JEWES AND JUDAISM IN EARLY CHURCH
HISTORIOGRAPHY: THE CASE OF EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA
(PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS AND EXAMPLES)

Oded Irshai

In the early modern critical study of Patristics, Church History and Chronography are relative newcomers. They 'erupted' following the early-ground breaking work of the sixteenth-century Joseph Scaliger with his meticulous exploration of Christian chronography expressed in two of his major works: laying the foundations in his *De emendatione temporum* (1583) and later in the attempt to reconstruct Eusebius's *Chronicon* which he published in his *Thesaurus temporum* (1606).¹ The latter major work was in a way composed as a refutation of the massive study *Annales Ecclesiastici* (1588–1607) by Cardinal Cezare Baronius, who in turn composed his work in reply to the Protestant project on early Christian chronology and history by the group of scholars known as the *Centuriators of Magdeburg* (the Magdeburg Centuries). With all that, it was not until well in the seventeenth century that the first editions of Church Histories began to appear by Henricus Valesius. Following a lull of almost two centuries, the end of the nineteenth century witnessed yet another decisive and most remarkable advance in the field, whence members of the German school of *Quellenforschung* (source analysis) such as Franz Geppert

¹ See A. Grafton, "Joseph Scaliger and Historical Chronology: The Rise and Fall of a Discipline," *History and Theory* 14 (1975): 156–83; Eadem, "From *De die natali* to *De emendatione temporum*: The Origins and Setting of Scaliger's Chronology," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 48 (1985): 100–43; Eadem, *Joseph Scaliger*, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1983–1993), where also earlier late Medieval scholarly attempts to come to grips with Eusebius's chronographical work are discussed.

As to studies on Eusebius's premises and methods in comprising his *Chronicon*, see, A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition* (Lewisburg, 1979); W. Adler, *Time Immemorial* (Washington D.C., 1989); Eadem, "The Chronicle of Eusebius and Its Legacy," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, eds., H. Attridge and G. Hata (Leiden, 1992), 467–91; and R. Burgess, "The Dates and Editions of Eusebius' *Chronici canones* and *Historia ecclesiastica*," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 48 (1997): 471–504; see also Eadem (with the assistance of W. Witakowski), *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronology* (Stuttgart, 1999).

and Georg Schoo and others published the first fruits of their analytical research tracing the origins of the sources used by the early Church Historians.² The latter in turn was followed by the first critical editions of Eusebius's *Church History* in the now celebrated series of the GCS (= Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, with later additions to the historical corpus).³

In recent decades one can discern a new wave of interest in the field whereby research is being focused more and more on the genre itself, its unique literary constructs, and above all on its governing motifs.⁴

Following the current and prevalent trend, I wish to examine more closely one theme of these early Christian treatises, which could be labeled as the "Jewish theme." I do not mean merely the sense in which Jews and Judaism were depicted, but rather the place of the "Jewish component," so to say, in the overall composition of the work *History* and its role in the shaping of its content.⁵ The importance of

² F. Geppert, "Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Socrates Scholasticus," *Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche* 3 (1898): 1–134; and G. Schoo, *Die erhaltenen schriftlichen Hauptquellen des Kirchenhistorikers Sozomenos* (Berlin, 1911), to which one may add also the earlier work of L. Jeep, "Quellenuntersuchungen zu den griechischen Kirchenhistorikern," *Jahrbuch für klassische Philologie Supplementband* 14 (1885): 105–54.

³ A special volume of studies has been devoted as an appraisal of this excellent and leading scholarly enterprise, see J. Irmscher and K. Treu, eds., *Das Korpus der griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller: Historie, Gegenwart, Zukunft* (Berlin, 1977).

⁴ Since the early eighties of the twentieth century, this trend has taken pride of place, in the course of which a multitude of studies devoted to a variety of aspects have been published. An exhaustive list of these monographs, as well as individual and multiple authored collections of papers, is well beyond the scope of this short study. Thus, a small selection of that wide ranging matrix in chronological order will suffice. S. Calderone, ed., *La storiografia ecclesiastica nella tarda antichità* (Messina, 1980); B. Croke and A. Emmett, eds., *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Sydney, 1983); G. Chesnut, *The First Christian Historians*, 2nd ed. (Macon, 1986); H. Lappin, *Von Constantin dem Grossen zu Theodosius II. Das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern' Socrates, Sozomenus und Theodoret* (Göttingen, 1996); G. Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography: Narratives of Retributive Justice* (London, 2000); G. Marasco (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity: Fourth to Sixth Century A.D.* (Leiden, 2003).

⁵ The centrality of this notion can be gleaned already from Eusebius's fashioning of the chronology of the world history in his *Chronicle*, whereby Abraham was seen to be the initial figure in human history, as Grafton and Williams have recently surmised following Eusebius's testimony (*Chronicle*, ed. R. Helm, 187) that: "the fall of Jerusalem and the death of thousands of Jews on the same day on which they crucified Jesus (Eusebius)—gave a clear sign of providential direction and the last step needed for the whole world to be open to Christianity," A. Grafton and M. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, 2006), 141. See also Burgess (supra note 1). The presence

this inquiry lies in the fact that these works were instrumental in the formation and crystallization of early Christian self-identity perhaps more than any other form of Christian writing. The presence of a Jewish component in Eusebius's *History* is a well-established fact, though so far it has not received the attention that it deserves. The following chapter is an attempt to fill in this scholarly void by offering some preliminary observations on the topic and by setting some guidelines for future research. Yet before embarking on our enquiry it is important to take note of the following points.

The chronological boundaries of Eusebius's *History* marked the point of departure for his later followers, primarily in the Greek-speaking Christian cultural milieu, beginning with Gelasius of Caesarea, whose work is lost,⁶ the Neo-Arian Philostorgius of which segments of his twelve book *History* were preserved for posterity via Photius's *Bibliotheca* (cod. 40),⁷ and culminating with the most prominent representatives of this genre in the fifth century, the so-called "synoptic successors," namely, Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen, and Theodoret of Cyrrus.⁸ And though the last three harbored some reservations

and impact of the Jewish / Hebrew chronology on the computation of Christian linear chronology was demonstrably acute as seen in Julius Africanus's *Chronography*, see, Africanus, apud, Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, X, 10, 6, however, Eusebius's perception of chronology differed from that of Africanus's primarily on theological-ideological grounds. While the latter advocated the centrality of the eschatological trait in chronological investigation, the former rejected its significance for the overall Christian message, denying the accuracy of the biblical chronology not to mention the highly mythical timelines of the early Greeks and Egyptians—but at the same time preferring the chronological record presented by the Septuagint to the one recorded in the Hebrew Bible, see, Grafton and Williams, *ibid.*, 148–62. In the wake of the above uncertainty, Eusebius opted (or maybe was even coerced) to begin his more certain chronological account with Abraham (*ibid.*, 168 and H. Inglebert, *Interpretatio Christiana. Les mutations des saviors (Cosmographie, géographie, ethnographie, histoire) dans l'Antiquité Chrétienne (30–630 après J.C.)* (Paris, 2001), 504–5), who was later to appear as the initial figure in the history of mankind as seen in Eusebius's opening remarks of his *Ecclesiastical History* (I, 2, 4–8). This fact for all intents and purposes signified the common natural background of the history of the people of the Bible and placed them in one and the same historical arena. However, see also Grafton and Williams (*ibid.*, 235) claim that Eusebius (and Origen) chose to introduce "alien elements—barbarian and non-Christian—into the (Christian) fabric" and its significance.

⁶ That is unless we accept the view that Rufinus of Aquileia plagiarized it.

⁷ The traditional attribution to Photius has recently been called into question by E. Argove, "Giving a Heretic a Voice: Philostorgius of Borrius and Greek Ecclesiastical Historiography," *Athenaeum* 89 (2001): 497–524 at 515–7. For a recent English translation with notes, P. Amidon, *Church History, Philostorgius: Church History* (Atlanta, 2007).

⁸ Among the latter, Socrates seems to take pride of place.

concerning Eusebius's historiographic enterprise, they nonetheless refrained from surveying the same terrain and openly pronounced his work canonic.⁹ That said, however, one cannot escape noting that Eusebius's successors forged their accounts in an utterly different political and cultural atmosphere from his own, for they were no longer at the mercy of a persecuting pagan empire. This stark contrast was noticed years ago by Arnaldo Momigliano, a master of historiographic research himself, who commented that, "With all his gifts Eusebius could not shape his historiography in such a way to envisage situations in which it would be impossible to separate what belonged to Caesar from what belonged to Christ."¹⁰

Eusebius's followers did not only canonize his historical narrative by beginning theirs from where he left off (i.e. Constantine's days), but they also followed his thematic agenda by focusing much of their presentation of contemporary history on the struggle between Christianity and the heretical world, however they defined the battling sides, and throughout not losing sight of the goal of presenting a universally unified empire under a Christian umbrella.¹¹

With Eusebius's deep influence on his successors established, and given their deep indebtedness to his pioneering enterprise, it is only incumbent on us to probe at this opening stage of our inquiry, whether they continued to follow his thematic guidelines. In more specific terms, did they incorporate in their histories a discernible "Jewish component"? Our quest in this case is justified and enhanced by the sheer fact that Sozomen opens his opus with the following remark:

My mind has been often exercised in inquiring how it is that other men are very ready to believe in God the word, while the Jews are so incredulous, although it was to them that instruction concerning the things of

⁹ See for instance the introductions of both Socrates and Sozomen to their respective *Histories* (though on this aspect they differ in style and emphasis). Both begin their treatises where Eusebius terminated his own *History*, i.e. in the days of Constantine. In the case of Socrates, his prime sources for the period of Constantine and his followers was Rufinus (or the lost history of Gelasius of Caesarea); on that aspect consult the introduction of G. Hunsen to the recent critical edition of Socrates's *History*, GCS, NF Bd.1 (Berlin, 1995), XLIII–XLVIII.

¹⁰ A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley, 1990), 141.

¹¹ See P. Allen, "The Use of Heretics and Heresies in the Greek Church Historians: Studies in Socrates and Theodoret," in *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, ed., G. Clarke (Rushcutters Bay, 1990), 265–289; and H. Leppin, "The Church Historians (I): Socrates, Sozomenus, and Theodoretus," in G. Marasaco (supra, note 4), 220.

God was from the beginning imparted by the prophets who likewise made them acquainted with the events attendant upon the coming of Christ before they came to pass. . . . When I consider this matter it seems reasonably remarkable to me, that the Hebrews [Sozomen seems to use rather carefully the distinction between "Hebraios" and "Ioudaios" applied earlier in Eusebius's writings] did not anticipate, and, before the rest of men, immediately turn to Christianity.¹²

There should be no doubt here as to the fact that Sozomen's outcry reflected a genuine and grave disappointment in the face of contemporary Christian failure in attracting the Jews to embrace the new faith.¹³

¹² Sozomen, *Church History*, 1, 1 (NPNF edition). The polemical distinction in Eusebius's terminology between *Hebraioi* roughly denoting the early Biblical Israelites as opposed to the *Ioudaioi* denoting the Jewish *Ethnos* living under the constraints of the Mosaic Law, to be found among other treatises in the opening chapters of his *History*, has been much discussed in recent scholarship, see J. Ulrich, *Euseb von Caesarea und die Juden. Studien zur Rolle der Juden in der Theologie des Eusebius von Caesarea* (Berlin, 1999), 59–68, 79–88; and A. Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea against Paganism* (Leiden, 2000), 102–10. More recently, Aaron Johnson has devoted a lengthy analysis of Eusebian usage of the same terminology in his *Praeparatio Evangelica*, arguing that, "The Jewish *ethnos*, Eusebius emphatically declares, arose as a corrupted form of the Hebrew *ethnos* as a result of Egyptianization before the exodus of the people under Moses. Eusebius can thus undergird an essentially anti-Jewish sentiment by retelling Jewish history as a deviation from the larger story of the ancient Hebrews," *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford, 2006), 94–125, at p. 94. In Eusebian chronological terms, the Jews and the Jewish kingdom ended their role in history and lost their heavenly guardianship when Vespasian crushed their revolt and destroyed Jerusalem, all of which occurred on the same day that they crucified Jesus, thus vindicating Christianity's cause, Eusebius, *Chronici Canones*. trans. Jerome, ed. J. Fotheringham (Oxford, 1923), 269: "Oportuit enim in isdem diebus paschae eos interfici, in quibus Salvatorem cruci, fixerant." Obviously, Eusebius was aware of the time that lapsed between the two events. His statement could be interpreted in either of the following ways: first, as a way of attaching special emphasis to the "day of Pascha" (in much the same way the rabbis interpreted the accumulation of bad omens and disasters which befell the Jewish people on the ninth of the month of Ab). But it could also be seen as a way of imprinting upon his readers the contraction of time in salvation history. See our observations *infra*, 820.

¹³ In this instance, I do not share Teresa Urbainczyk's attempt to downplay Sozomen's dismay, claiming that he "does not say that *all Jews* persist in their error, but only that they were less willing than the Greeks to recognize the signs," T. Urbainczyk, "Observations on the Differences between the Church Histories of Socrates and Sozomen," *Historia* 47 (1997): 355–73, at 365. Nothing of this sentiment is discernible in Sozomen's statement. There is no sense of relativism in his saying, to the contrary the mood is of utter dismay, see the following note. It would seem that Sozomen's grave feelings had to do with his Palestinian background and more specifically with his ancestral family and village Bethulia situated on the southern edge of the Gaza district, a family and an extended converted close social circle in an area that underwent a rather swift transformation to Christianity, cf. Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*,

However, this probing question from the mid-fifth century failed and still fails to resonate with current scholars in the field. One can glean from the recent (at least that of the last two decades) and current growing wave of scholarship on early Christian historiography, that indeed very little attention has been devoted to this topic and when dealt with it was carried out in a rather unsatisfactory manner.¹⁴

The time has finally come to revert back to the earlier manifestations of the so-called “Jewish theme” in the work of the Father of Christian Historiography.

At least in regards to Eusebius, one may skip the somewhat apologetic tone with which we have so far been presenting the issue. For, in the course of the preface to his *History* where he sketched out the plan for his all-encompassing enterprise to portray the path of the Church in history from its “seemingly sectarian” grassroots to a persecuted minority and up to its initial stages as a universal force,¹⁵ he

V, 15. However, Eran Argove’s recent insinuation that Sozomen’s ancestors might have come from Jewish stock is less than likely, see his, “A Church Historian in Search of an Identity: Aspects of Early Byzantine Palestine in Sozomen’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*,” *ZAC* 9 (2006): 367–96, at pp. 374–5.

¹⁴ I have in mind the monographs on Socrates Scholasticus (otherwise excellent studies) by T. Urbainchik, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor, 1997) and her article (cited supra note 13); and M. Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates: Untersuchungen zu Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode und Person* (Göttingen, 1997). Wallraff maintains (ibid., 135–145) that Socrates had parted ways with the Eusebian model (compare R. Markus, “Church History and Early Church Historians,” *Studies in Church History* 11 (1975): 1–17, at 9–11). A slightly more dismissive tone on the same issue in regards to Eusebius’s “continuator” has been recently voiced by Hartmut Leppin, (supra note, 11), pp. 252–3: “Eusebius defined as one of his main themes the fate of the Jews. This does not make much impact on the Church historians.” In fact the latter sentiment is quite common. Jews and Judaism do not seem to invoke much scholarly interest even in a study devoted to Socrates’s fifth-century historical and cultural worlds. Their presence is treated in regards to commonplaces like the impact of Julian the “apostate” on later fourth- and fifth-century historiography, and in relation to their involvement in rather esoteric episodes in history, see, B. Bäbler and H.-G. Nesselrath (hrsg.), *Die Welt des Sokrates von Konstantinopel* (München, 2001) (passim).

In a forthcoming paper, “Christian Historiographers’ Reflections on Fifth-Century Alexandrian Jewish Christian Violence,” I propose to demonstrate a rather different impression at least in regards to Socrates’s *History* narration of contemporary history, whereby the Jews do seem to have a very noticeable presence not only in the narrative but also a substantive role in shaping the inner traits of the account.

¹⁵ The most obvious query that comes to mind in this context concerns the demographic expansion and geographic spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire. A pioneering and thought-provoking model has been set by the late K. Hopkins, *JChS* 6 (1998): 185–226. For a rather different model of the demographic expansion of Christianity, one which claims that until the end of the fourth century the numbers

included in a very conspicuous place in the thematic table of contents the following proclamation: “To this [previous theme, on heresy and heretics] I will add the fate of the Jews from the moment of their plot (ἐπιβουλή) against our Saviour.” While the theme concerning the Jews is actually one of a list of six and as such would seem at first sight to be engulfed by the other governing themes (among which we find the dissemination of the true doctrine and the creation of a barrier against heresy, (i.e. the transmission of the true doctrine via the authorized succession of bishops (διαδοχή), as well as the treatment of persecution and martyrdom), a closer and attentive reading of the Eusebian narrative (indeed, coupled with a quantitative assessment) seems to betray another impression altogether. In fact Eusebius’s opening statement cited above can and should be regarded as an understatement. For the Jews or matters concerning Jews or Judaism (in their wider sense) seem to occupy a substantial portion of five out of the ten books of the *History*.¹⁶

Having said that, it seems to me that in the sphere under discussion Eusebius too has not fared that well in modern scholarship. Much of the scholarly effort still revolves around the intricacies of the *Quellenforschung* (source criticism in its widest form) of the narrative, and less on his understanding of individual themes or their contextualization within the overall narrative structure of his *History*.¹⁷ In all of these

of Christians in the empire was far less meager than so far assumed in the scholarly world and with a substantial difference between urban and rural areas, and also allowing for the existence and growing influence of a segment of society that could be labeled as “semi-Christians,” see now R. MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200–400* (Atlanta, 2009), 111–4. MacMullen’s model, if accepted, opens a new array of questions relating to the current portrayal of the status of ethnic minorities within the early Roman Christian imperial setting, see further our comments (*infra*, note 61).

¹⁶ Suffice it to mention only a few of the topics dealt by Eusebius in the span of the first five books, that is, the primordial and biblical history of the Hebrews at the center of which Eusebius focuses on figures like Adam, Abraham, and Moses, who serve as prefigurations or heralds of Christ. In the same vein, we find great emphasis on the unfolding pre-destined sequence of events leading from the days of Herod the Great to the destruction of the Temple. Last but not least in this short list are the events leading to the Bar Kochba Revolt, which sealed the fate of the Jews.

¹⁷ Much scholarly effort has been put into deciphering the source material and its usage in Eusebius’s narrative, if only to mention some important advances in the field since B. Gustafson’s, “Eusebius’ Principles in Handling his Sources as found in his Church History, Books I–VII” *SP* 2 (1961): 429–44; R. Grant’s influential study, *Eusebius as a Church Historian* (Oxford, 1980). In the same vein one may regard M. Hardwick’s study, *Josephus as a Historical Source in Patristic Literature through Eusebius* (Atlanta, 1988), but very little is devoted to the underlying concepts and

otherwise most welcome additions to the scholarly output on early Christian Historiography, the Jewish component has so far unfortunately been relegated to relative obscurity.¹⁸

Having stated the above, it is important to emphasize at the opening of our discussion its modest scope. Rather than dealing with the wider range of explicit references and inferences on the Jews and Judaism in Eusebius's narrative, many of which would merit an in-depth study (though this would represent the rule rather than the exception within the overall Eusebian apologetic strive), the scholarly goal intended here is to examine closely the more intricate and implicit Jewish components (here, in two inter-related instances), in the hope of facilitating a different reading of the Eusebian narrative.

The first instance concerns the highly condensed hagiographic portrayal of James the Just and his martyrdom. The second concerns Eusebius's preoccupation with genealogy, particularly the Davidic lineage. As will become apparent, both instances share some points and both were linked in Eusebius's mind to the wider context of the succession lists and the dissemination of the authentic and authorized tradition within the early Church, seen no doubt as the ultimate barrier against heresy.

I. JAMES THE JUST IN EUSEBIUS'S *HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA*

It is well known that Jesus's Davidic descent was followed *κατὰ σάρκα* (= after the flesh) in the confines of the Jerusalem mother Church by the appointment of James "the Lord's Brother" as the local shepherd. Following a long career as a local leader, described in detail in the Book of Acts, James was put to death in a vicious manner in the year 62 C.E. at the instigation of the Jewish leaders and by the hands of a

premises behind the narrative. Apart from the above, it is important to draw attention to yet another recent comprehensive study by S. Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors: His Citation Technique in an Apologetic Context* (Leiden, 2006). A rather different scope with a more thematic view in mind has been offered in some other studies cf. G. Chesnut, (supra, note 4); M. Gödecke, *Geschichte als Mythos: Eusebs "kirchengeschichte"* (Frankfurt a.M., 1987) and more recently G. Trompf (supra, note 4).

¹⁸ With all its meticulous treatment of "the Jewish Theme" in the Eusebian *History*, Grant's (supra, note 17, pp. 97–113) effort is predominantly focused on the interplay of the sources within Eusebius's narrative. However the most welcome set of studies in the volume edited by W. Attridge and G. Httta, (supra, note 1) adds some important reflections on the topic.

local mob. The most elaborate and somber account of this gruesome act was imparted to us by Hegesippus via Eusebius's narrative.

However, prior to our close reading of Hegesippus's account, a few introductory remarks on James are in order. James emerges from the New Testament literature as a somewhat enigmatic figure. Following Jesus's crucifixion, James became the leader of the local, Jerusalem law-observant community, though some would contend that he was the leader of one faction within that community and from that standpoint he conducted the affairs of the Church as seen in the famous episode of the Apostolic Council of 48 C.E. (Acts, 15).¹⁹ However, little is known concerning the circumstances of James's election to his office as well as his status within the leading apostolic circle surrounding Christ.²⁰ A stream of later traditions, some emanating from apocryphal sources, strives to establish a rather solid picture of James's unequivocal primacy. This begins with a tradition quoted by Eusebius from Clement of Alexandria's *Hypotyposes* (book seven) claiming that following the resurrection "the Lord gave the tradition of knowledge to James the Just and John and Peter" and they in turn handed it to the other Apostles who passed it on to the Seventy.²¹ Apparently this does not only place James in a position of superiority among the Apostles, but the chain of tradition and transmission described by Clement with its clear hierarchical setting very much resembles a similar structure

¹⁹ William Horbury has recently presented a convincing picture of the earliest Jerusalemite "Mother Church" community with its diverse makeup, see his, "Beginnings of Christianity in the Holy Land," in *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origins to the Latin Kingdoms*, eds., O. Limor and G. Stroumsa (Turnhout, 2006), 7–89, esp. pp. 55–67.

²⁰ See for instance among others Paul's rather ambiguous statement Gal. I, 18–19 (compare *ibid.* 2, 9), see the following note.

²¹ Quoted by Eusebius, *HE* II, 1, 4. This could well be a disparate version of the same scene described by Paul in I Corinthians, 15, 3b–7 in which Christ's revelation to James is in a secondary place, disclosing some sort of rivalry or contest between Peter and James. For a recent thorough survey of the scholarship on this particular point as well as on other aspects concerning James's figure and image, see now, M. Myllykoski, "James the Just in History and Tradition: Perspectives of Past and Present Scholarship" (Pt. I), *Currents in Biblical Research* 5 (2006): 73–122, at 84–87 (I hereby like to thank my friend and colleague Sabrina Inowlocki for this most helpful reference). More on James as one of the "pillars" (στῦλοι) of the formative Christian community in the time of Paul see R. Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, ed., R. Bauckham (Grand Rapids, 1995), 415–80, at 441–50.

described by the rabbis in the opening of tractate Avot of the Mishnah.²² Apart from Clement's attestation concerning James's superior position among his contemporaries, there are several other traditions which vindicate his primacy.²³ A later testimony to his glaring position at least among the local later ("uncircumcised") Christian constituency is told by Eusebius:

Now the throne of James (Ἰακώβου θρόνον), who was the first to receive from the Saviour and the Apostles the episcopate of the church of Jerusalem, who also, as the divine books show, was called a brother of Christ, has been preserved to this day; and by the honour that the brethren in succession there pay to it, they show clearly to all the reverence in which the holy men were and still are held by the men of old time and those of our day.²⁴

This is the context in which we encounter the Hegesippian tradition, based most probably on the local Jerusalem Christian library or

²² Avot, 1, 1. On the conceptual similarity, see A. Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Greco-Roman Near East* (Oxford, 2004), 208–40.

²³ Succinctly described by W. Horbury (supra, note 19), 57: "In what can be called—from the standpoint of the later Church—the mainstream of Christian tradition, this vast prestige of James the Lord's brother is reflected and yet also domesticated by the repeated assertion, found in Clement... and then in Eusebius... that James was the first bishop of the Church in Jerusalem. Other contemporary writings, however, attest a far greater claim for James as the successor of Jesus and the bishop of bishops... These writings include the probably second-century Gospel according to Thomas (Logion 12 of the Gospel of Thomas) and the third-century Syrian tradition preserved in the Clementine Homilies and Recognitions... and the Gospel according to the Hebrews quoted by Jerome in his short biography of James... points in the same direction." By far the most compelling statement attributed to Jesus concerning James is to be found in the above-mentioned Logion, in which Jesus beseeches his disciples to "follow James whence and from ever they come, because for him alone heaven and earth were created." (see M. Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (New York, 2007), 141). It would seem that Horbury holds that there is a straight line between James's image in the NT and that proposed by later traditions. For a more nuanced scholarly evaluation of the various post apostolic, early patristic as well as Gnostic traditions, see Millykoski's survey, (supra, note 21), Pt. II, *ibid.* 6 (2007): 11–98.

²⁴ *HE VII*, 19 ed. K. Lake, *LCL*. No doubt the displaying of James's *Throne* to visitors (whoever and how many they were, for prior to the fourth century only a trickle of pilgrims arrived in Jerusalem) or local lay people and above all local clergy, greatly enhanced the image of the local Christian community. Attaching to this *Sedes Jacobi* its innate apostolic clout most probably bolstered the local church's political claim for Apostolic supremacy at least within the Palestinian orbit. This claim realized to an extent in the seventh canon of the council of Nicaea, remained a source of extreme contention between the sees of Caesarea and Jerusalem for most of the fourth century, see recently my discussion, "The Dark Side of the Moon: Eusebius of Caesarea as an Ecclesiastical Politician," *Cathedra* 122 (2007): 63–98 (Hebrew).

archive, handed down by its Judeo-Christian community. The records were received and presented by Eusebius with the highest esteem: "Hegesippus... belongs to the generation after the Apostles, gives the most accurate (ἀκριβέστατα) account of him (James)."²⁵ This would seem to be indeed an intentional exaggeration on the part of Eusebius, for Hegesippus's career can and should be dated with much certainty to the latter decades of the second century.

II. THE MARTYRDOM OF JAMES THE JUST (ACCORDING TO HEGESIPPUS)

James's death has been shown by the words of Clement already quoted, narrating that he was thrown down from the Temple battlement and beaten to death with a club, but Hegesippus, who belongs to the generation after the Apostles, gives the most accurate account of him speaking as follows in his fifth book:

²⁵ Compare his appraisal in *HE*, IV, 8, 1 and IV, 22, 1. It is interesting to note that in Rufinus's translation of Eusebius's comment the reference to Hegesippus's accuracy has been dropped. On Hegesippus's life, career, and work, see the short survey by T. Halton, "Hegesippus in Eusebius," *StPat* 17 (1982), 3: 688–93, and the still invaluable study on Hegesippus's *Hypomnemata* by Niels Hyldahl, "Hegesippus Hypomnemata," *STh* 14 (1960): 70–113; for an updated bibliography on Hegesippus, see now O. Skarsaune, "Fragments of Jewish Christian Literature Quoted in Some Greek and Latin Fathers," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, eds., O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik (Peabody, 2007), 338–45 at 338 note 42. Eusebius's total reliance on Hegesippus's *Memoires* in matters relating to the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic periods is in need of closer scrutiny which is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to point out here that his dating of Hegesippus as belonging to "the generation after the Apostles" is in the least an exaggeration, for he flourished during the second half of the second century. To what ought we attribute this inaccuracy and excessive praise of this source? Should Eusebius's choice here be attributed to the lack of sources at his disposal or was it a deliberate choice? While I am yet unsure of the answer, I think that William Adler's recent work on Julius Africanus, who could certainly have been yet another potential Christian informant on that period, demonstrates how he glossed over this period, cf. W. Adler, "Iulius Africanus: Chronographiae—The Extant Fragments," ed. M. Wallraff et al. and trans. W. Adler, *GCS NF Bd. 15* (Berlin, 2007), XV–XVI. Some scholars have accepted at face value Eusebius's assertion that Hegesippus was of Jewish stock (cf. G. Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1989), 167), which would seem reasonable enough. See however, W. Telfer's opposite view (*infra*, note 35). Recently it has been asserted that Hegesippus's account of James's martyrdom was probably based on "some sort of Grundschrift," see Sh. Mitchell, *Perfect Martyr: The Stoning of Stephen and the Construction of Christian Identity* (Oxford, 2010), 82–4, see further *infra*, 819.

The charge of the Church passed to James, the brother of the Lord, together with the Apostles. He was called the 'Just' by all men from the Lord's time to ours, since many are called James, but he was holy from his mother's womb. He drank no wine or strong drink, nor did he eat flesh; no razor went upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not go to the baths.²⁶ He alone was allowed to enter the sanctuary (*ta hagia*),²⁷ for he did not wear wool but linen, and he used to enter alone into the temple (*ton naon*) and be found kneeling and praying for forgiveness for the people.... So from his excessive righteousness he was called the Just and *Oblias*, that is in Greek, "rampart of the people and righteousness" as the prophets declare concerning him.... Now, since many even the rulers believed, there was a tumult of the Jews and the Scribes and Pharisees saying that the whole people was in danger looking for Jesus as the Christ. So they assembled and said to James, "We beseech you to restrain the people since they are straying after Jesus as though he were the Messiah. We beseech you to persuade concerning Jesus all who come for the day of Passover (*ten hemeran tou Passcha*), for all obey you.... Therefore stand on the battlement of the temple (pinnacle, *pterugion tou ierou*) for because of the Passover all the tribes, with the Gentiles also, have come together." and they cried out to him and said: "Oh just one, to whom we all owe obedience...? And he answered with a loud voice: "Why do you ask me concerning the Son of Man? He is sitting in heaven on the right hand of the great power, and he will come on the clouds of heaven." And many were convinced and confessed... and they (the Scribes and Pharisees) cried out saying: "Oh, oh, even the Just one erred." ... And they fulfilled the scripture written in Isaiah (3, 10): Let us take the just man (*aromen ton dikaion*)... So they went up and threw down the Just, and they said to one another: "Let us stone James the Just" and they began to stone him since the fall had not killed him, but he turned and knelt saying: "I beseech thee, O Lord... forgive them for they know not what they do." And while they were thus stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of Rechabim, to whom Jeremiah the prophet bore witness, cried out saying: "Stop! What are you doing? The Just is praying for you." And a certain man among them (the crowd) one of the laundrymen, took a club with which he used to beat the clothes, and hit the Just on the

²⁶ The different facets of his demeanor will be dealt with later on. The issue of refraining from the baths could, however, be interpreted in more than one way. On the one hand it could well reflect disdain on the part of James for heathen customs. But on another level it could be construed as reflecting some sort of reference to the highly charged "holy scent" about which see now, S. Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley, 2006), 201–6.

²⁷ Both Jerome in his Latin translation of Eusebius, and Epiphanius, (Panarion, 78, 13, 5 compare *ibid.* 29, 4, 3) who had access to an entirely different tradition or had a varied Hagesippian tradition, interpreted this term as meaning *sancta sanctorum* or τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων respectively.

head, and so he suffered martyrdom. And they buried him on the spot by the temple, and his gravestone still remains by the temple. He became a true witness both to Jews and to Greeks that Jesus is the Christ and at once (*euthus*) Vespasian began to besiege them. (Eusebius, *HE* II, 1–18 ed. K. Lake, *LCL*)

It ought to be stated from the outset that this most elaborate account of the harrowing event of James's martyrdom should be studied in conjunction with the parallels found in other earlier near contemporary as well as later sources such as Josephus's *Antiquities* (20, 197–200); the Nag Hamadi *Second Apocalypse of James* (61, 15–63, 32); Clement of Alexandria's *Hypotyposes* (apud Eusebius, *HE*, II, 1, 3–5; 23, 3); and last but not least in comparison with Epiphanius's section on James in his *Panarion*.²⁸ However, our task here is to confine our inquest to retrieving the deepest and unique facets of the Eusebian narrative.

The text quoted above is indeed complex as much as it is enigmatic. In the past century or so, it has generated among scholars immense interest and still does today.

Scouring the scholarship, one will encounter nearly endless attempts to resolve the problem of the historicity, and the veracity of the account. Hegesippus, as the reporter of the events, has been portrayed in these studies at times as a complete charlatan and at others as the ultimate

²⁸ Much of the scholarship on James's portrait within these sources coupled with close observations on their interdependence has been carried out, for instance recently, by R. Bauckham, "For What Offence was James Put to Death," in *James the Just and Christian Origins*, eds., B. Chilton and C. Evans (Leiden, 1999), 199–232, esp. pp. 201–18. While strongly and convincingly advocating the view of a missing common source for the *Second Apocalypse of James* (from Nag Hamadi) and Hegesippus's account, Bauckham tends to reject the possibility of any link between these sources and the descriptions in the *Clementine Recognitions* (*ibid.*, 206). One could add to that that Epiphanius's description of James's conduct and martyrdom (*Panarion*, 78, 13,2–14,6) though bearing some resemblance to the earlier, second-century sources, should be treated separately. For a recent thorough survey of the scholarship, see, M. Millykoski, (*supra*, note 23), esp. pp. 31–43, 63–83. See too the brief survey of the relevant sources on James accompanied by some valuable insights, in Y. Eliav's recent study, "The Tomb of James, Brother of Jesus, as *Locus Memoriae*," *HTR* 97 (2004): 33–59, at 36–8 (see more *infra*, note 32). Of the sources mentioned by us here, the most significant for its historical kernel is obviously the account by Josephus, which has a bearing on the famous *Testimonium Flavianum* in Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18, 63–4, on which see now A. Whealey, "Josephus, Eusebius of Caesarea, and the *Testimonium Flavianum*," in *Josephus und das Neue Testament. Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen*, hsgs., Ch. Böttrich und J. Herzer (Tübingen, 2008), 73–116 at 108–15 (on James in Josephus), and see further Mitchel's important observations, (*supra*, note 25), 79–97.

bearer of the banner of truth.²⁹ Alongside the former efforts there have been ongoing attempts to discover the missing links between this earliest late second-century source on James and the first century events, as well as to try and solve the riddle of the links between the later traditions and their interdependence on each other.³⁰ Another significant trend among scholars advancing a holistic interpretation of this convoluted account, seems to me to have been quite futile, not in the least because it was linked time and again to the issues of historicity and the constant search for the kernel of truth or an authentic core.³¹ Recent research, however, has put the entire treatment of the text on a new and more productive footing, namely, the deciphering of the symbolism radiating from James's image, coupled with a much more vibrant attempt to expose the sources inspiring the formation of James's image.³²

My own following comments are mainly aimed at adding another component, based on clues in the text itself and on a rabbinic parallel so far ignored in the discussion. It is my aim to expose two different components of the narrative:

- A. James's unique profile and demeanor and the traits of *imitatio* in the story.
- B. Chronographic significance of the time of his martyrdom.

Let us dispense first with the most conspicuous layer of the story, which is also the most overtly Christianized. It concerns the resemblances presented in the narrative between James and the historical

²⁹ Indeed the most comprehensive survey of the scholarship on James and his image has been offered by M. Millykoski, (supra, note 21), 73–122 and in Pt. II, (supra, note 23).

³⁰ See supra, note 25. Much in the same manner regarding the study of the *Pseudo Clementine* literature known to have been redacted during the fourth century, cf. the excellent in-depth survey of the problem and its bearing on our contemporary understanding of the notion of “*The Parting of the Ways*” between late antique Judaism and Christianity by A. Yoshiko-Reed, “Jewish Christianity” after the “Parting of the Ways”: Approaches to Historiography and Self-Definition in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds., A. Yoshiko-Reed and A. Becker (Minneapolis, 2007), 188–231.

³¹ See Millykoski (supra, note 23), 33–5.

³² Most notably in the current wave of research are J. Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (2nd edn.), (Columbia, 2004), esp. pp. 118–32, and R. Bauckham in a series of articles most significant for our purposes here, the one mentioned supra, note 28.

role models he emulates in his actions and fate. It begins with James's description as "Holy from his Mother's womb" indicating divine election, which no doubt invoked the image of Samson the Nazirite, John the Baptist, and the prophet and priest Jeremiah, whose career as a prophet brought him within close reach of his own martyrdom. Above all however, James's story is cast in a guise of an *imitatio Christi*.³³ James is perceived by the narrator to be the ultimate follower of Christ in essence and in practice, albeit in an earthly setting. This image is imparted by conjuring up in the minds of the believers formative scenarios and anecdotes from the life of Jesus, albeit in a much contracted time frame. Thus, James's final public appearance takes place on the eve of the Jewish Passover just as Christ. James is further portrayed as placed by the Scribes and Pharisees (the Satanic figures incarnate) on the pinnacle of the Temple (ἐπὶ τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ἱεροῦ) and tempted to deny Christ (compare Matthew, 4, 5–7). Finally, James is envisaged by his extreme ascetic conduct and via his priestly lineage (to which we shall return below) as being the earthly incarnation of the ultimate high priest (he is the only one to enter the Holy of Holies), the very same conceptual role attributed to Christ according to the Epistle to the Hebrews (7–11). On a deeper level, the emulation here is by far more significant, whereby James shares with Christ a similar role. In Hebrews (ch. 8), Christ is depicted as the heavenly high priest ministering in the heavenly temple which is at one level the archetype of the earthly sanctuary, but at the same time is superior and distinct from it in a way of a platonic dichotomy. James's role in the earthly sanctuary, ministering as the high priest and entering the inner sanctum once a year, officiating in prayer and supplication devoid of any sacrificial offering parallels the ultimate sacrifice of Christ and his ministering on the one hand, but at the same time his way of ministering is distinctly dissimilar from the earthly high priestly custom. Thus, James's image is projected as mediating between the two cosmic realms, the earthly and the heavenly, well befitting his intercessory role.³⁴ Also as

³³ On the force and usage of *imitatio* and *emulatio* in regards to a multi-layered image of an historical or pseudepigraphic figure see the most useful recent theoretical insights offered by H. Najman, "How Should We Contextualize Pseudepigrapha? Imitation and Emulation in 4 Ezra," in Florentino García Martínez Festschrift, *JSJ* (Suppl. Ser. 122), eds., A. Hilhorst, E. Puech and E. Tigchelaar (Leiden, 2007), 529–36. (I'd like to thank Hindy Najman for helping me formulate my thoughts on this matter).

³⁴ These comments are based on the perceptive observations of H. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1989), in particular 216–224,

in the case of Christ according to the aforementioned Epistle, James's martyrdom could and should be seen as a final sacrificial gesture at least in the sense that it ushered in the divinely retributive blow to the Temple. However, as we shall venture to demonstrate later on, in this latter sense James's historic role, according to the Hegesippian narrative, eclipsed in some way the widely held notion that it was Jesus's death that brought about the destruction of city and its temple. Having said that, it still would seem that all in all James's portrayal by Hegesippus was meant to bolster his reputation and to serve as a clear vindication of his supreme image as Jesus's rightful follower.

The less conspicuous layers of the account are also, so to say, the most Judaized.³⁵ While the scholars mentioned above, among them in particular Bauckham, have aspired to place the Hegesippian James in its suitable historical and cultural setting as a product of biblical and post-biblical images, it is my intention to extend the chronological as well as the cultural boundaries of the milieu in which James's image could have been molded.

According to Bauckham,³⁶ the governing motifs in the narrative describing James's tragic death, were modeled on the detailed plight of the anonymous persecuted man described in Psalm 118, verse 13: "I was pushed hard so that I fell"; verse 10: "Save us we beseech you {Hosanna}; verse 25: "The Stone the head of the corner" = Standing by the pinnacle of the corner...; verse 19: "Open to me the gates of

compare Skarsaune's (*supra*, note 25) 341–342. While Skarsaune is right in his portrayal of the Hegesippian James as superior to the High Priest and in fact supplanting him, some of the examples he adduces as proofs are difficult to sustain. For instance, his claim that James was superior on account that unlike the High Priest he entered the Holy of Holies daily (*ibid.*), is unfounded. It cannot even be based on the implicit insinuations in Hegesippus's account, and it should be rejected on account of Epiphanius's version of James's priestly demeanor, for his entry to the Holy of Holies was only once a year (*Panarion*, 78, 13, 5). Also the claim that James was holy from his mother's womb is not meant to exclude him from the laws regarding purity, and his abstention from going to the baths had nothing whatsoever to do with the laws of purity. Samson the Nazirite as well as Jeremiaiah the prophet and priest who were holy from their mothers' womb were still obliged to observe the laws of purity.

³⁵ It is rather difficult to say whether this set of traditions with their overtly Jewish appearance tilts the perennial issue of Hegesippus's Hebraic/Jewish origins in one way or another. On Hegesippus's possible Hebrew background see Eusebius, *HE* IV, 22,8, on which see W. Telfer's dismissive arguments, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?" *HTR* 53 (1960): 143–53, and Skarsaune's recent comments (*supra*, note 25), 339–40.

³⁶ *Supra* note, 28. Recently, Skarsaune (*supra*, note 25) adopted Bauckham's observations. See too Mitchell (*supra* note 25), 83–4: Bauckham's work is "foundational and compelling."

‘Righteousness’ that I may enter through them” (= James) and more). And James’s nazirite and priestly conduct, which in the eyes of earlier scholars posed a great anomaly, were also modeled on a biblical antecedent, that of the figure of the eschatological priest in the future Temple, according to Ezekiel (ch. 44, 15–21): “But the priests, who are Levites and descendants of Zadok . . . they alone are to enter my sanctuary . . . they are to wear linen cloths. They must not wear any woolen garment . . . they must not shave their heads or let their hair grow long, but they are to keep the hair of their heads trimmed. No priest is to drink wine when he enters the inner court.”

While on the face of it this biblical model does offer an attractive and somewhat comprehensive background, it nonetheless resonates as a rather artificial³⁷ setting for the enigmatic traits of James’s legendary figure and tragic martyrdom. Above all, it fails to contextualize the narrative’s unique details in a more contemporary cultural atmosphere. Moreover, although Bauckham’s insights seem to be helpful in the task of exposing the narrative’s literary tropes embedded in the biblical figure of James’s multi-layered image, the historical setting of the tradition is far too explicit to be denied further contextualization.

It is my contention that the additional and significant clues to understanding this enigmatic narrative lie somewhat hidden away in the last section of the Hegesippian tradition, that is in the reference to the priest from the Rechabites, whose appearance at the final moment on behalf of James seems rather bizarre. The presence of the Rechabites in the story, though noted by some scholars, were seen to present yet another biblically based trait, but at times also dismissed as a sheer corruption of the text.³⁸

³⁷ One cannot escape this impression especially in regards to Bauckham’s analysis of James’s martyrdom in light of Psalm 118.

³⁸ Typical among the latter (as well as most accessible) is Kirsopp Lake’s note (ad locum, in the LCL edition): “*This story is confused and improbable*. The text of Hegesippus must be corrupt, for the Rechabim is only the Hebrew plural and merely repeats the previous phrase. Moreover, the Rechabites were a tribe of Kenites who were adopted into Israel (cf. 1 Chron. ii, 55 and Jer. 35, 19). *There is no evidence that a Rechabite was ever counted as a Levite, or that the name was that of a sect to which a priest or Levite could have belonged* (my emphasis). Epiphanius (Haer. 78, 14) replaces this mysterious Rechabite by Simeon the son of Clopas.” Put in that crude way, Lake seems to be probably right concerning the odd misuse of the singular and plural forms of the Hebrew name Rechabites, as well as the official tribal lineage between the Rechabites and the priestly families. However, he was unaware of the profound chain of traditions in the rabbinic sources identifying the Rechabites as intermarrying with members of the priestly families and becoming part of the priestly fold, so much so

The Rechabites, known from the days of Jeremiah (ch. 35, and First Chronicles ch. 2) as a clan of the house of the Kenites (the descendents of Jethro), assumed in obedience to their ancestral father Jonadab the son of Rechab an ascetic posture with an unclear aim. They refrained from drinking wine, cultivating the land, and lived in tents. Because they obeyed the commands of their forefather, unlike the Israelites who remained disobedient to the words of the Lord and the call of the prophets, they were to be rewarded: "There shall never cease to be a man of the line of Jonadab son of Rechab standing before me" (Jeremiah 35:19), a clear allusion to their future priestly function.³⁹ Thus, however small and short-lived their appearance was in the biblical arena, it seems to have carried much greater weight with late Second Temple and early rabbinic circles.

The two branches of the aforementioned Rechabite tradition bearing clear links between them are: 1. the "*Story of the Rechabites*" (dated between the late first and second centuries) incorporated in the much later (sixth or seventh century) Christian text known as the *Narratio Zosimi*.⁴⁰

2. A string of halakhic midrashim (Mechilta on Exodus, and Sifre on Numbers, roughly from the first half of the third century), betray a

that they officiated at the Temple alter. Also, Lake's note on the Epiphonian tradition points us in the direction of regarding that tradition as somewhat divorced from the Hegesippian version in Eusebius.

³⁹ If I am right and the Rechabites served as a possible model for James, this characteristic could also be tied with the symbol of an acquired priestly stance just like Melchizedek, the archetype of an ultimate priest.

⁴⁰ On this text see, M. James, *Texts and Studies 2/3* (Cambridge, 1893): 96–108. On its possible early Jewish core which could be dated as early as ca. 100 C.E. or maybe even slightly earlier, see, B. McNeil, "The Narration of Zosimus," *JSJ* 9 (1978): 68–82; and J. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research* (Chico, 1981), 223–8 and later in the introduction to his own edition and translation of the *Story of the Rechabites*. However, see C. Knight's criticisms of the early dating and preference for a date ca. the end of the second century, "The Story of Zosimus' or 'The History of the Rechabites,'" *JSJ* 24 (1993): 235–45. Recently however, Ronit Nikolsky in her dissertation, based on the close scrutiny of some of the peculiar details in *The Story of the Rechabites* claims that it is a late fourth-century exemplary ascetic narrative composed by monastic circles and later incorporated into the seventh-century *Narratio Zosimi*, R. Nikolsky, "The Provenance of the *Journey of Zosimos* (also known as *The History of the Rechabites*)," (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003), 24–60 (Hebrew). While Nikolsky's reservations concerning the Story of the Rechabites might be justified to an extent they do not change the fact that there might have been an earlier layer to the tradition to which the rabbinic and Hegesippus lore are witnesses. In any case, as we shall venture to demonstrate, the parallels we are able to draw between the latter sources are a clear vindication of their unique early Jewish provenance.

much greater role for the Rechabites than that allotted to them by the bible. They function as a model of the ultimate mourners and intercessors for the holy city and its Temple, constantly engaged in prayers for forgiveness on behalf of its dwellers, much the same role attributed to James. The composite set of customs attributed to the Rechabites in the above-mentioned streams of tradition is most revealing, presenting the Rechabites in their most extreme ascetic garb.

They refrained from drinking wine, and drank only water, kept a unique diet, they did not use razor on their heads and did not anoint themselves with oil, and entreated the Almighty to grant forgiveness to the people and respite for the city. What is so striking about their portrayal is the fact that they are described in no uncertain terms as part of the priestly fold (a clear fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy).⁴¹ Even more astonishing is that in an appendix to yet another highly enigmatic rabbinic tradition on the genealogy of the Patriarchal family, it is stated that Rabbi Joseph the son of Halafta, a member of a prominent Galilean rabbinic family from the town of Sepphoris, was a descendent of the Rechabite clan.⁴² Historical validity aside, the impact of the pedigree and image of the Rechabites seems to exceed their initial role within Jewish circles.

Thus, according to the above, James was of Davidic as well as priestly descent, and at the same time a Rechabite by conduct and not merely a Nazirite as postulated by many scholars.⁴³

⁴¹ Jer. 35, 19.

⁴² Palestinianan Tal. Ta'anot, 4, 2; Genesis Rabbah, 98, 13. R. Yossi and his father R. Halafta were renowned informants on Temple traditions. R. Yossi's descent from the Rechabites (who served according to rabbinic traditions as temple servants (though not explicitly priests) might explain the following tradition in the Bab. Tal. Shabbat, 118b: "R. Jose said: I have never disregarded the words of my neighbors. I know of myself that *I'm not a priest*. [Yet] if my neighbors were to tell me to ascend the dais (to recite the priestly blessing, Numbers, VI, 22-27), I would ascend it." The intriguing element in R. Jose's saying was not the fact that he complied with their request which according to all medieval commentators amounted only to his ascent to the dais (without participation in the benediction itself), but rather the actual request which essentially reflected the common tradition that the Rechabites have fully assumed priestly duties.

⁴³ In this I tend to follow William Adler's assertions of Christ's dual lineage, see his "Exodus 6:23 and the High Priest from the Tribe of Judah," *JThS* 48 (1997): 24-47, and more recently in his short study, "The Suda and the High Priesthood of Jesus," in *For a Later Generation: The Transformation of Tradition in Israel, Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, George W. Nichelsburg *Festschrift*, eds., B. Bow and R. Werline (Harrisburg, 2000), 1-12.

Given the strong leanings in the martyrdom segment of the Hegesippian narrative on the Halakhic/Mishnaic procedure of stoning (something that is much more apparent in the parallel tradition found in the Second Apocalypse of James, and noted already by several scholars, to which one could add the rather strange clobbering on the head of James by the fuller),⁴⁴ it should come as no surprise to us that James's Hegesippian profile emanating from local Jerusalemite Judeo-Christian sources/archives is so conspicuously Jewish in its posture.

Last but not least on our short list yet again in the same vain of *imitatio* is the uniquely amplified view propagated by Hegesippus that James's martyrdom immediately draws the wrath of God: "and so he suffered martyrdom...and at once (ἐνθὺς) Vespasian began to besiege them."

The immediacy emphasized here should be seen within the simple constraints of causal history well known in ancient historiography. Given the fact that according to Josephus, James was stoned by the Sanhedrin led by the high priest Hanan son of Hanan during the lull between the two Roman procurators Festus and Albinus, that is in the year 62, Vespasian's siege in 67/8 would have seemed close enough in the contemporary frame of mind.⁴⁵ From the point of view of the local circles of the Church of the Circumcision (as they are nicknamed by Eusebius himself) the tragic effect of James's demise served as a vindication of their cause. But at the same time it solved a grave chronological as well as theological quandary for Eusebius's divinely determined time-line. By then the concept voiced since the second century by the likes of Justin Martyr and Tertullian, that Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed as result of Christ's crucifixion by the Jews, was a widespread notion.⁴⁶ Thus, by maintaining the Hegesippian portrayal of James as a sort of an *imitatio Christi* and as a figure who was highly regarded in public opinion due to his supreme righteousness as a sort of an "extension" of Christ, Eusebius solved in a way the problem

⁴⁴ Mishna, Sanhedrin, 6, 4, on that and the clobbering on the head see my remarks, The Church of Jerusalem—From the "Church of the Circumcision" to the "Church of the Gentiles," in *The History of Jerusalem: The Roman and Byzantine Periods (70–638 C.E.)*, eds., Y. Tsafrir and S. Safrai (Jerusalem, 1999), 61–114, at 73–4 (Hebrew).

⁴⁵ There is no need to dwell upon the gap of five or six years as Grant and others do. Causality or as it is known in current scholarship as "causal over-determination" served as a central trait in early Roman historiography, especially in Livy's *History*, see recently, J. Davies, *Rome's Religious History: Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus on their Gods* (Cambridge, 2004), 87–96.

⁴⁶ See G. Lampe, "A.D. 70 in Christian Reflection," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, eds., E. Bammel and C. Moule (Cambridge, 1984), 153–71, esp. pp. 166–71.

posed by the substantial chronological gap between Christ's death and the final divine retributive blow by God the Father to avenge the death of his Son.⁴⁷ James himself served the task of an intercessor for the city just like his Jewish counterpart the priest Rabbi Zadok (note the similarity between the epithet *Just* and *Zadok*) did in the last forty years leading up to the destruction, years of atonement, fasting, and mourning.⁴⁸ However, this theological quandary could have easily been explained by envisaging this gap in time as only a lull in the divinely determined plan in anticipation for the people's repentance.

Having said this, the question does arise as to what premise led to the creation of James's image, and more so what in the circulating tradition made it so appealing to Hegesippus himself and even more so to Eusebius.

Taking my cue from William Adler's recent study on Julius Africanus's life and works, I would say that Eusebius's reliance on Hegesippus should be regarded as based on a default mechanism. For Julius Africanus displayed rather great indifference towards the Church of his own time.⁴⁹ However, on second thought, it would seem that the "Jewishness" of James, the pillar of the church, the bulwark of the people, did serve Eusebius on another front, i.e. the historical preservation of the line of succession within the church. James was the quintessential representative of the formative age in the Mother Church of

⁴⁷ See Origen's claim, *Contra Celsum* I, 47: "The same author (Josephus), although he did not believe in Jesus as Christ, sought for the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. He ought to have said that the plot against Jesus was the reason why these catastrophes came upon the people, because they had killed the prophesied Christ; however, although unconscious of it, he is not far from the truth when he says that these disasters befell the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was a brother of 'Jesus the so-called Christ,' since they had killed him who was a very righteous man." Compare *ibid.* II, 13 in his Commentary to Matthew, X, 17 and H. Chadwick's note in his translation of *Contra Celsum* (Cambridge, 1980), 43, note 2. The attribution of this statement to Josephus is doubtful, for no such saying is attested in Josephus's *Antiquities*. Elsewhere (*supra*, note 44), 79–80, I have suggested that even if such an explicit statement is absent from Josephus's works, it is implicitly insinuated in his presentation of the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in book 20 of his *Antiquities*.

⁴⁸ Lamentations R. I, 5; Bab. Tal. Gittin, 56b. R. Yohanan b. Zakkai is quoted in the passage in Lamentations R. as saying to Vespasian: "If there had been (in Jerusalem) one more like him, though you had double your army, you would have been unable to conquer it." The resemblance to the role and impact of James in the Hegesippian tradition is quite stark, see also Eliav (*supra*, note 28), p. 3, note 17.

⁴⁹ W. Adler, "Sextus Julius Africanus and the Roman Near East in the Third Century," *JThS* 55 (2004): 520–50, at 546–50.

Jerusalem, and as such was the first in a formidable line of succession of the elect (members of the family of Jesus) and the members of the college of *episcopoi* overseeing the affairs of the Jerusalem Church until yet another decisive moment in history, at least in the eyes of Eusebius (as clearly indicated in his *Chronicon*), the crushing of the Bar Kochba revolt. In Eusebius's eyes, the end of Bar Kochba and the creation of the gentile Roman colony of Aelia sealed the fate of the Jewish city of Jerusalem forever. It brought with it the establishment of a new local Church, the Church of the Gentiles, reaching an apex in the time of Narcissus (end of second century).⁵⁰ In this, so to say, unique historical-theological scenario, the local Church of the Circumcision served yet again as the spiritual guardian of the city, until the "fullness of its time" a historical notion advanced by Eusebius in one of his later works, the *Theophany*.⁵¹

Hegesippus's traditions concerning the divine election manifested in the Davidic lineage and succession within the Church of the Circumcision, and at the same time the effort to strip the Jewish contenders to the same lineage of their royal garb can be seen as a corollary to the above.⁵² This brings me to the second and final segment of my discussion.

The second instance concerning the Jews in Eusebius's historical narrative concerning the fall of Jerusalem and its aftermath deals with his treatment of the Davidic lineage as an important point of contention between Jews and Christians, particularly in the context of the heightened and contradicting eschatological schemes in both camps. I would like to argue that in this case (as in his treatment of the early Paschal controversies (late second century)), Eusebius had one eye on the past, but as one of the most skilled ecclesiastical politicians of his age, had the other gazing at contemporaneous affairs as well as future

⁵⁰ I have offered some preliminary comments on the symmetry between the two opposing lines of succession in the local church, see Irshai, (supra, note 44), 87–9. For more on the Jewish origins of the early leaders of the Jerusalem Church see, S. Mimouni, "La tradition des évêques chrétiens d'origine juive de Jérusalem," *StP* 40 (2006): 447–66.

⁵¹ IV, 20, based on Luke 21:24.

⁵² It is important to point out however an interesting exception to the latter Jewish claim, namely, the famous Gamaliel the respected leader of the Sanhedrin. However, while in the Book of Acts he is portrayed in a positive way, in the later *Clementine Recognitions* he is presented as a cryptic Christian in the aid of James and his community.

eventualities.⁵³ Be that as it may, his emphasis on this matter much pre-dated the actual criticism leveled at the Patriarchs which at times was clad in obsessive animosity towards those Jewish contenders to the Davidic lineage. Such was the case in Cyril of Jerusalem's sneering remarks, or Epiphanius's description with glittering joy of the Patriarch's secret conversion. This was disclosed to Epiphanius by a Tiberian Jew, Joseph, at the time a confidant of the Jewish Patriarch who later converted and in reward for his services to the empire merited the title Comes. Both instances from the second half of the fourth century were later followed (early in the fifth century) by a hagiographical story told by Lucian of Caphar Gamla describing the discovery of the remains of the first-century Gamaliel buried aside St. Stephen the Proto-Martyr.⁵⁴

Following James's death, local tradition has it that he was succeeded by yet another member of the Davidic family, Simeon son of Clopas, Jesus's uncle. Simeon led the Jerusalem community until the ripe old age of 120, when in the days of Trajan he was martyred under the pretext of being a descendent of the House of David and a Christian. Simeon's martyrdom was the climax of a wave of persecution mounted by the Romans as early as Vespasian's days and resumed by Domitian on the same account of the Royal lineage, to which we come now. In two

⁵³ See my study "From Oblivion to Fame: The History of the Palestinian Church (135–303 C.E.)," in (supra, note 19), O. Limor and G. Stroumsa, 91–139 at 109–12, some of my contentions there should however be slightly modified in light of Clement Leonard's recent comprehensive study, *The Jewish Pesach and the Origins of the Christian Easter: Open Questions in Current Research* (Leiden, 2006).

⁵⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 12,17; Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 30 (on the Ebionites); Lucian of Caphar Gamla, S. Vanderlinden, "Revelatio Sancti Stephani (BHL 7850–6)," *REB* 4 (1946): 178–217 (two Latin recensions). While Cyril plainly though viciously derided the Patriarchs' lineage, the latter two exposed the Patriarchs as cryptic believers in Christ admitting his supreme and genuine power and authority. On the latter two instances see now, E. Reiner, "Joseph the Comes of Tiberias and the Jewish-Christian Dialogue in Fourth Century Galilee," in *Continuity and Renewal*, ed., L. Levine (Jerusalem, 2004), 355–86 (Hebrew), and my own remarks, O. Irshai, "St. Stephen and Gamaliel: Relics, Politics and Polemics in Early Fifth Century Palestine," in: "*Ut Videant et Contignant*": *Essays on Pilgrimage and Sacred Space, In Honor of Ora Limor*, eds., Y. Hen and I. Shagrir (Ra'anana, 2011), 49–69 (Hebrew). To all that one ought to add the fluctuating attitude towards the Patriarch and the office of the Patriarchate in late fourth-century imperial law, *Codex Theodosianus*, 16,8,8 (from 392); 16,8,13 (397); 16,8,15 (404); 16,8,17 (404) and especially, 16,8,22 (from 415) and 16,8,29 (429), reflecting the cessation of the office), on these and other aspects of the history of the Patriarchate consult (among others), D. Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Jewish Self-Government in Antiquity* (Tübingen, 1994).

separate anecdotes, which could be adduced to Hegesippus, Eusebius's main source, we read in the first instance as follows:

After the martyrdom of James and the taking of Jerusalem which immediately ensued, it is recorded that those apostles and disciples of the Lord... took council... and all with one consent approved Simeon... and it is recorded, moreover, that Vespasian after the taking of Jerusalem, gave orders that all the members of the family of David should be sought out, so that none of the royal tribe might be left among the Jews, and that for this reason a most terrible persecution once more hung over the Jews.⁵⁵

The second anecdote in Eusebius's *History* which is easily linked to the previous one concerns the persecution in the days of Domitian, when the emperor gave orders that those who were of the family of David should be put to death, and some heretics (Jews?) brought an accusation against the descendents of Jude (another brother of the Saviour after the flesh) that they were of the family of David and that they bore kinship to Christ himself. Eusebius then continues with Hegesippus's detailed account of the trial of these descendents, recording the dialogue between them and the emperor, their heroic stand resulting in their acquittal, which in turn enabled them to rule the churches.⁵⁶

The reliability of the testimonies should be called into question, for they seem to have no solid parallels in any other source. Indeed, the evidence concerning a wave of Roman persecution aimed at the "patriarchal family" (however one perceives the existence of this or another dynasty in a governing role so early in the history of post-Second Temple Jews) is more than slim.⁵⁷ However it may seem, we are yet again facing here a Hegesippian tradition, a figment of the local "collective" Jerusalemite, Judaizing, or Judeo-Christian creative imagination in the service of upholding a certain image.

Without going into a detailed contextual discussion of these anecdotes or indeed the entire Hegesippean/Eusebian set of episodes on the Roman persecution of the Davidic royal lineage, I would like to direct our attention towards the possible potential of an implicit

⁵⁵ Eusebius, *HE*, III, 11–2 (ed. K. Lake, *LCL*).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 19–20.

⁵⁷ The earliest historically reliable phase of the office of the Patriarch, that is during Judah the Patriarch days (the turn of the second century), see S. Stern's careful study, "Rabbi and the Origins of the Patriarchate," *JJS* 54 (2003): 193–215.

agenda reflected in these stories when seen through the looking glass of a seemingly parallel rabbinic anecdote.

Both episodes of Roman persecution of the Royal House of David do not seem to share the same characteristics. On the one hand, we have a wave launched by Vespasian in the wake of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple explicitly aimed at the Jewish descendents of David, with no hint about the outcome, and on the other, a second or even a third wave, directed particularly against the Christian Davidic branch (at the behest of a heretical/Jewish snitching), adducing Christian perseverance as well as a presence of good tidings brought about by Divine providence. Thus if juxtaposed, we receive via Eusebius's cut and paste methods (this time from Hegesippus's *Memoires*) two conflicting images of seemingly similar events albeit in a linear presentation. But it seems that there might be more to it here.

Putting aside Eusebius's emphasis on the importance of the church's struggle against heresy and the centrality of succession lists and sound tradition within the wider context of this struggle, it seems that the anecdotes dealing with the Davidic lineage strike yet another cord in Eusebius's concept of salvation history. As mentioned above, Eusebius devotes much of the first book of his *History* to the task of presenting the "first dispensation concerning Christ himself" as an essential part of handing down the history of Christian origins. In that he included not only the early prophetic utterances in the Bible in regards to Christ having come true (as in the case of Herod, the first foreigner king of Israel, in line with Jacob's blessing of Judah (Genesis 49,10)), but also a lengthy discussion of the conflicting traditions in the Gospels regarding Christ's genealogy, highlighting the important role of the relatives of Christ according to the flesh, (the so-called *despousynoi*) in recording and upholding the traditions concerning Christ's Davidic descent.⁵⁸ The aim of this, among other things, was to demonstrate a predestined "parting of the ways" which the Jews in Jesus's period and afterwards failed to see and follow (and more so opposed), thus cementing their gloomy future.

In this frame of mind, genealogy served as a tool in Eusebius's presentation of Christianity's novel message within an ideal of historic continuity. It would seem that genealogy as part of Christianity's discourse of descent was instrumental in its rhetoric of salvation

⁵⁸ HE, I, 7.11 on the term *despousynoi* see J. Taylor, *Christianity and the Holy Places: The Myth of the Jewish-Christian Origins* (Oxford, 1993), 31–6.

and more so in the determination of its self-identity.⁵⁹ I would like to suggest that along the line of argument apparent in earlier Christian apologists that Jesus restored authentic Hebrew practices and created a common past, his royal descent forged a common future destiny. In the conflicting traditions presented above, shared roots could have been expedient in providing a historical explanation for contemporary differences, and if I am right in tracing here a possible hidden agenda, one may even postulate a claim for supersessionism.

Armed with this possible interpretation of Eusebius's agenda, it is time to highlight a famous, though belated, rabbinical tradition which could serve as a later formulated counter-narrative to the Eusebian set of anecdotes on the Davidic descent.

One of the most famous and most studied rabbinic tales describing and explicating the atmosphere surrounding the *Hurban* (i.e. the destruction of the Second Temple and Jerusalem) is the fascinating story of Raban Yohanan ben Zakkai's miraculous escape from Jerusalem and his encounter with the Roman commander Vespasian, soon to become emperor. The version from the Babylonian Talmud here presented, though one of the few and most probably the most recent one, is also the most elaborate. The entire tradition with its surprising ending has been studied in light of the Judeo-Christian dialogue, to which I am unable to allude here.⁶⁰

After his escape, Yohanan is presented before the emperor and towards the end of the ensuing fascinating dialogue between them

⁵⁹ On this important trope in the early Christian discourse, see D. Buell, *Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York, 2005), 103–15. (On Justin Martyr's understanding of Christian descent and peoplehood.) These notions tie in well with the ideological usage of Episcopal succession lists as a barrier against heresy. On possible Jewish precedents for such usages of genealogy and succession lists, see the interesting parallel pointed out by T. Thornton, "High-Priestly Succession in Jewish Apologetics and Episcopal Succession in Hegesippus," *JThS* 54 (2003): 160–3.

⁶⁰ Most prominently in G. Hasan-Rokem's study *The Web of Life—Folklore in Rabbinic Literature: The Palestinian Aggadic Midrash Eikah Rabba* (Tel Aviv, 1996), 183–203 (Hebrew). Another bold and ingenious attempt to re-explore this well trodden terrain of the Legends of the *Hurban*, is I. Yuval's study, "The Lord will take Vengeance, Vengeance from His Temple'—Historia sine ira et studio," *Zion* 59 (1994): 351–441, at 362–73 (Hebrew). Yuval discusses the role of Titus in the destruction of the Temple and his devastating fate with an eye on Christian parallel legends exemplifying the notion of *vindicta salvatoris*, thus creating and solidifying a complex matrix of Judeo-Christian readings of the Destruction of the Temple in Late Antique and Medieval lore (see further note 64).

he poses to the emperor a set of wishes which are granted by Vespasian: "Grant me Yavne and its sages, and the dynasty of Rabban Gamaliel, and a physician to heal Rabbi Zadok" (Babylonian Talmud, Gittin, 57B).⁶¹

⁶¹ In this context it is important to tackle the rather problematic issue whereby the tradition cited here appears in the Babylonian Talmud rather than in any parallel Palestinian rabbinic source. To add to the confusion, one ought to note that the tripartite request by Rabbi Yohanan is formulated in a cross between Aramaic and Hebrew. If indeed as postulated, the encounter described here carries anti-Christian overtones the textual setting becomes more complex. So far the substantial presence of Anti-Christian material in the Babylonian Talmud has not been sufficiently dealt with and some issues in the socio-historical sphere remain open. How are we to account for the relative silence of Palestinian sources on Christianity? Indeed, this is a wide ranging question which hinges upon wider issues. However, it would be profitable to present two recent attempts to address the topic. Nonetheless, we should bear in mind that these attempts are to be judged within the wider context of the recent rich crop of studies, part of the much wider and very lively debate on the place of the Jews in the late antique setting in light of rabbinic and a wide array of other sources, including Christian and pagan. The question posed by us here definitely merits a far more comprehensive discussion that is by far beyond the scope of the current chapter.

Thus, in light of A. Schremer's very recent study, *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity, and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (New York, 2010), this question becomes even more pressing. Was it as Schremer postulates (introduction, 22) that Christianity did not pose a real threat in the rabbinic eyes even during the early generations after the empire came under Christian sway, and therefore Christianity left only very scanty marks in the Palestinian rabbinic sources? But what of the Babylonian Rabbinic standpoint? Was the presence of a substantial body of *Adversus Christianos* texts in the Babylonian Talmud a sort of distant response, as recently argued by P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, 2007), 115–22, to a state of an intimidating cultural atmosphere in Palestine in which the Jews felt more and more marginalized, while in the "competing" Babylonian center the prevailing cultural atmosphere under the Sassanian kingdom was continuously hostile towards the Christians subjecting them to persistent persecutions, all in all a situation in which the "Jews felt not only free but even encouraged to express their anti-Christian sentiments" (ibid. 121)? Schäfer's dichotomous presentation of the status of Babylonian Christians (subjected to constant persecution) as a foil to the state of the marginalized Jews in Palestine seems slightly rigid and over-simplified, especially in light of the nuanced persecution of Christians in Sassanian Persia, which was not exclusively on religious grounds, but comprised of extended periods of tolerance towards them between the late fourth and the sixth centuries, which serves as a call for a more nuanced approach, on which see the careful survey by the late Z. Rubin, "Eastern Neighbours: Persia and the Sassanian Monarchy (234–651)," in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500–1492*, ed., J. Shepard (Cambridge, 2008), 130–55, at 140–4.

Be that as it may, in the case at hand as well as other instances (which we are unable to expound here) there is room for some further suggestions. Thus, I would like to postulate the following, which essentially addresses the Babylonian rabbinic "textual prominence" as posing a solution to a textual redactional situation rather than reflecting a wider cultural-historical picture. Thus, it would seem that the Babylonian Talmud served in this and other instances as a channel for the transmission of these belated

As to the first request, Yavneh being the famous place where the rabbinic academy set its new premises after the fall of Jerusalem, I tend to follow several scholars who have envisaged here (albeit in different

most probably Palestinian traditions that were formulated and redacted after the fast if not abrupt redaction of the Palestinian Talmud (ca. 360 C.E. or perhaps later in the eighties of the fourth century) and chunks of the local classic Midrashic material; to that one might add now (what has been only recently claimed) concerning the Babylonian provenance of the earliest traditions and layers of the rabbinic anti-Gospel, the *Toledoth Yeshu*. If correct, it is plausible to contend that the tradition under discussion here was formed in the wake of the mounting Patristic criticism, (from the second half of the fourth-century), of the Patriarchal family and its lineage. Having said that, there is yet another inescapable hurdle to overcome, namely, what induced the redactor of the passage in the Babylonian Talmud to advocate the case of the Gamalielian (patriarchal) dynasty? Given the rivalry (concerning genealogically based supremacy) between the Exilarchate in Babylonia and the Patriarchate in Palestine as revealed in rabbinical traditions emanating from both centers (see the recent detailed discussion in G. Herman's study, *The Babylonian Exilarchate in the Sassanian Period*, (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2005), 161–71, 182–7), the question becomes even more intriguing. A possible clue in the direction of solving the historical anomaly presented here lies in the fact that essentially the enhancement of the political stature of the Palestinian Patriarch also served inadvertently to promote in the public eye his so-called "rival" the Exilarch. Possible support for this hypothesis comes from the findings of Richard Kalmin discussing the Babylonian and Palestinian portrayal of the Biblical figure of King David ("Portrayals of Kings in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," *JSQ* 3 (1996): 320–41, at 329–38. In the course of his investigation, Kalmin discovered that there is a clear dichotomy between Babylon and Palestine on that matter. While the "Palestinians tend to portray him as a saint the early Babylonians depict him as a repentant sinner" (*ibid.*, 340), however, later (fourth-century) Babylonian Amoraim tend to present a more nuanced depiction of David incorporating in the process Palestinian views. While Kalmin does offer several possible reasons for this division, he rejects as insufficient the more obvious solution, namely, that this unique disparity is in reality a reflection of contemporary political attitudes towards the Palestinian Patriarch (*ibid.*, 336–7). While Kalmin might be right in discarding this view on the whole, the mutation in the Babylonian attitude towards David might nonetheless also reflect the fact that by the fourth century when the office of the Exilarch was well established and firmly claimed lineage to the Davidic House, the Babylonians portrayed a more favorable picture of David. In this context, a propagandist claim in favor of the Palestinian Patriarch's relations with the Roman Imperial authority reflected in the text under discussion might have been welcomed too. If so, there might be some grounds here for further speculation, which hinges upon the possible dating of the text at hand.

Thus, one might argue that the text, with its somewhat appeasing atmosphere, might very well reflect the favorable disposition towards the Christians and the Jews in the period of the Persian king Yazdgard I (399–420). In the course of his period in power, relations between Persia and Rome became rather amicable and the Persian monarch, according to Byzantine sources, was entreated by Arcadius to become his son Theodosius II's guardian. On this (and the central role played by the Persian envoy the eunuch Antiochus in promoting relations between the formerly rival courts), see G. Greatrex and J. Bardill, "Antiochus the *Preaepositus*: A Persian Eunuch at the Court of Theodosius II," *DOP* 50 (1997): 171–97, at 171–4, 177. Yazdgard also issued an edict of tolerance in favor of the Christians, which appears in the accounts of the

forms) a sort of a “foundation legend” of an etiological nature. The parallels with the Pella tradition (the escape of the Jerusalem Mother Church Community to Pella in Trans-Jordan on the eve of the Roman siege, described in Eusebius’s *History* and parallel sources, have been repeatedly demonstrated.⁶²

Be that as it may, the request to grant an Imperial sanction for the Gamalielian dynasty, otherwise known in the rabbinic traditions as the Patriarchal family from the Davidic stock, has not received the full attention it deserves. I have alluded earlier to the possible late fourth-century context of this request, namely the intricate Christian adverse attitude towards the Jewish Patriarch (and in particular towards R. Gamaliel VI) reflected in many contemporary Patristic and Imperial legal texts. Here I would like to suggest that within the constraints of the Eusebian traditions discussed above, what we have is a possible rabbinic “counter-narrative,” according to which in opposition to the Hegesippean claim that Vespasian (and for that matter his Flavian successors too) launched a ruthless manhunt against the descendents of the House of David, the rabbis disseminated a tradition whereby on the contrary, the Roman emperor rather sanctioned the further flourishing of the Royal-based leadership among the Jews. And while the Pella story was presented by Eusebius (i.e. Hegesippus) as a sort of manifestation of *Donatio Dei* (due to its oracular theophany calling upon the early Jerusalemite Christians to leave town), Yavneh and the Patriarchal succession were presented as a tale of a *Donatio*

Eastern Christian Synod of 410 convened under the auspices of Yazdgard in Seleukia-Ctesiphon (the Persian capital) with great pomp. In the course of that Synod it was made public that the emperor acknowledged Mar ‘Ishaq as the *Catholicos* (head of all the Christians in the East) and sanctioned his rulership (all this has been preserved via the Acts of the synod in the *Synodicon Orientale* edited and translated by Jean-Baptiste Chabot, Paris 1902), so much so that in contemporary sources Yazdgard was portrayed for his far-reaching actions in favor of the Christians and their institutions as a *second Constantine*. On Yazdgard’s policies in regard to the Christians see in short (with display of the sources and further bibliography) B. Dignas and E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge, 2007), 34–5. On Yazdgard I’s image in contemporary and later sources, see recently, S. McDonough, “A Second Constantine? The Sassanian King Yazdgard in Christian History and Historiography,” *JLA* 1 (2008): 127–41. In light of the above, it seems quite clear how in that time and atmosphere the reference to Vespasian’s acknowledgment and the public sanctioning of the Gamalielian dynasty, however legendary, served as yet another tool in the contemporary Palestinian (Patriarchate) and Baylonian (Exilarchate) self-proclamation and promotion.

⁶² See especially, A. Saldarini, “Johanan ben Zakkai’s Escape from Jerusalem: Origin and Development of a Rabbinic Story,” *JSJ* 6 (1975): 189–220.

Imperatoris,⁶³ which in the fourth century when these stories circulated had much more political clout, at least in the battle over public opinion of a marginalized minority, as the Jews were.⁶⁴

In conclusion though thematic analysis of the *genre* of *Church History* with all it entails in regards to the subject matter and narrative formation has progressed immensely in the last decades, it still remains to a wide extent in its infancy. Missing from this new and dynamic matrix is the “Jewish Theme/Component.” In the above chapter we attempted to demonstrate the importance and potential richness of that component for our understanding of the Eusebian *Church History* project. We have tried to draw attention not only to the explicit but also to the implicit or “hidden transcripts” in Eusebius’s sources and narrative as well as to the ways they were utilized in the course of his work. While Eusebius might be an obvious case study, since he placed the Jews and their fate as a central theme in his narrative, his successors are much more elusive, but nonetheless as we have hinted above and tried to demonstrate elsewhere, they, alongside *Eusebius’s History* (which in this regard is far from exhausted) merit a detailed comprehensive thematic study.

⁶³ Is it possible (and this I postulate very hesitantly) that the atmosphere leading to the official honorary titles (*spectabilis*; *illustris*) being conferred on the Patriarchs by the emperors (according to some of the imperial laws (cited above, note 54)) is reflected in the rabbinic text which at the same time sets it in the formative, distant legendary past?

⁶⁴ On this I differ from Yuval (op. cit. note 60) note 41, who tied the approval of Vespasian to the later Christian medieval legend known as the *Donatio Constantini* rather than to the early fifth-century Christian milieu in the context of the contest over the preservation or annulment of the Jewish institutions. My contention here is very much in line with Yitzhak Baer’s bold assertion from forty years ago that the rabbinic stories (especially those found in the Babylonian Talmud) on the events surrounding the Great Revolt and the Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple were formulated in the early fifth century, see Y. Baer, “Jerusalem in the Time of the Great Revolt,” *Zion* 36 (1971): 127–90, at 185 (Hebrew). In conjunction with the latter view of the centrality of the above mythic past at that given time and place (coupled with notions hinted above in note 61) and without analyzing the essence of his arguments, it is important to add here to the mix the view asserted by Daniel Boyarin, concerning the time and place of the birth of the Yavneh Legend with its ethic and impact on the rabbinic consolidation of power in the post-Talmudic era (fifth to sixth centuries) which were setting in at the very same time when the solidification of the hierarchical and dogmatic principles of the Nicaean Council was taking place, see D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, 2004), 151–201.

CARNIVALESQUE AMBIVALENCE AND THE CHRISTIAN OTHER IN ARAMAIC POEMS FROM BYZANTINE PALESTINE¹

Ophir Münz-Manor

I. INTRODUCTION

During the three hundred years of Byzantine rule over Palestine, Jewish culture flourished. This was the age of rabbinic exegetical and homiletical works (Midrash), of the Aramaic translations of the Bible (Targum), of liturgical poetry (*Piyyut*),² and of the synagogue mosaic floors.³ However, while rabbinic literature and the art of the synagogue are often studied from a cross-cultural perspective,⁴ the rich poetic corpus of the period has not received a similar treatment.⁵ In the

¹ This is a modified and enhanced version of an article originally published in Hebrew as: "Other Voices: Haman, Jesus and the Representations of the Other in Purim Poems from Byzantine Palestine," in *Popular and Canonical: Literary Dialogues*, eds., Y. Shapira, O. Herzog and T. Hess (Tel Aviv, 2007), 69–79, 211–217 (Hebrew). Special thanks go to my dear friend Michael Rand, who not only contributed to the translations of the Aramaic poems but also shared several brilliant insights with me.

² See: A. Shinan, "The Late Midrashic, Paytanic, and Targumic Literature," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume IV: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed., S. Katz (Cambridge, 2006), 678–98.

³ See: L. Levine, "Jewish Archaeology in Late Antiquity: Art, Architecture, and Inscriptions," in *ibid.*, 519–55.

⁴ For recent treatment of Midrash in a cross-cultural context see: G. Hasan-Rokem, *Tales of the Neighborhood: Jewish Narrative Dialogues in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2003); D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, 2004); I. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 2006). With regard to the visual arts see: Z. Weiss, *The Sepphoris Synagogue—Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* (Jerusalem, 2005); G. Bowersock, *Mosaics as History—The Near East from Late Antiquity to Islam* (Cambridge, 2006), 113–22.

⁵ This lacuna certainly relates to the overall concentration on the production of critical editions, as well as to the emphasis given to the philological, structural, and liturgical aspects of these poems. It should be noted, though, that in recent years we have witnessed a growing interest in the interaction between the Jewish and Christian liturgical and poetic traditions, as shall become clear in the course of the essay. For an overview of this interaction see: O. Münz-Manor, "Reflections on the Nature of Jewish and Christian Poetry in Late Antiquity," *Pe'amim—Studies in Oriental Jewry* 119 (2009): 131–72 (Hebrew). A version of this article also appeared in English as, "Liturgical Poetry in the Late Antique Near East—A Comparative Approach," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 1/3 (2010): 336–61.

present essay I wish to bolster, therefore, the cross-cultural study of this liturgical poetry by examining two poems for the feast of Purim that (re)present Christian figures in a surprising way; in the first text the figures of Haman and Jesus are juxtaposed and in the second those of Zeresh and, as I shall argue, the Virgin Mary.

My inquiry begins with an interesting article dedicated to the anti-Christian polemics in Hebrew liturgical poetry. At the outset of the article the author, Wout van Bekkum, notes that “specific allusions to the political and religious status of the Jews in Byzantium are sparse. As official representatives of the Jewish communities, the *Payytanim* are not primarily interested in direct religious polemics and no explicit support can be derived from their work.”⁶ Moreover, having spoken of the *Payytanim* (i.e. the Hebrew poets) van Bekkum notes, “their elitist poetry did not permit them to scorn and ridicule Christian beliefs as in contemporary Aramaic poetry.”⁷ Van Bekkum points here to the poem for the feast of Purim mentioned above, in which “the hanged Haman is compared to the hanged god of the Christians.” He distinguishes, therefore, between the stylized liturgical poetry written in Hebrew (*Piyyut*) and the poems written in the vernacular Galilean (or Jewish Palestinian) Aramaic that were performed outside of the synagogue or, at the very least, outside of the synagogal liturgy.⁸ Furthermore, the poem that according to van Bekkum “scorn[s] and ridicule[s] Christian beliefs” is characterized by Joseph Yahalom and Michael Sokoloff in their recent edition of the text as a parody.⁹ Else-

⁶ W. van Bekkum, “Anti-Christian Polemics in Hebrew Liturgical Poetry (*Piyyut*) of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries,” in *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays*, eds., J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (Leiden, 1993), 308. For more examples of such polemics in Hebrew liturgical poetry see: D. Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from the Second Temple to the Fifth Century* (Tübingen, 2003), 283–8.

⁷ van Bekkum, *Polemics*, 310.

⁸ van Bekkum’s (rather implicit) assertion is now corroborated in the critical edition of the Aramaic poems published by: J. Yahalom and M. Sokoloff, *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Poetry from Late Antiquity, Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary* (Jerusalem, 1999), 20–45 (Hebrew). For a short English introduction see: idem., “Aramaic *Piyyutim* from the Byzantine Period,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 75/3 (1985): 309–21. Joseph Heinemann, who devoted a groundbreaking study to these Aramaic poems, highlighted *inter alia* some folkloric features in them that support van Bekkum’s distinction as well. See: J. Heinemann, “Remnants of Ancient *Piyyutim* in the Palestinian *Targum* Tradition,” *Ha-Sifrut/Literature* IV (1973): 362–76, xviii–xix (Hebrew). See also: Münz-Manor, *Other Voices*, 69–71 and note 54 below.

⁹ Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 29–33.

where, Yahalom has asserted that this parody proves “how aware the Jews were of the accusations against them” and that “the spirit of the carnival with its jests helped them to handle the harsh attacks on their beliefs.”¹⁰ I believe that Yahalom and Sokoloff are right in claiming that this poem has a parodic nature and that it is connected with carnivalesque practices. Nonetheless, I would like to offer a less polarized categorization of Judaism and Christianity and to claim that in these texts one can observe a literary and cultural *ambivalence* towards the Christian figures, an ambivalence that is characterized by a simultaneous flow of empathy and mockery.

II. THE “PASSION OF HAMAN”

This poem narrates an imaginative dialogue between Haman and other biblical figures who are regarded as enemies of the Jewish people, such as Pharaoh, Goliath, Nebuchadnezzar, and so on. Each figure complains about his bad fortune and each time Haman replies and justifies the punishment that was inflicted on him. Thus, for instance, Sennacherib addresses Haman and claims:

You should have learned from me
for you are greater than me
my sense...

מליף הווה לך מיני
דאת רב מיני
ת..... הוני

An angel went out against me
with branches thrashed me
and smote my host

מלאך עלי נפק
וחוטרין יתי דפק
ואוכלוסיי ליה ספק

Of my entire people
I was left alone
said Sennacherib

מן כל עמי
לא אשתיירת לי לגרמי
אמר סנחריב

¹⁰ J. Yahalom, *Poetry and Society in Jewish Galilee of Late Antiquity* (Tel Aviv, 1999), 58–60 (Hebrew). In a recently published article, Menachem Kister maintains that these poems (i.e. the Jesus-Haman poem as well as the Zeresh-Mary poem) are not parodies at all. “The Jewish listener did not have pity on Haman, Zeresh, their sons or Jesus; this rejoicing only augmented the positive happiness of the victory over them and provided new vision for it.” See M. Kister, “Jewish Aramaic Poems from Byzantine Palestine and their Setting,” *Tarbitz—A Quarterly of Jewish Studies* 76 (2007): 161–2, note 302 (Hebrew). A similar opinion is offered by Hagith Sivan in her recent book: *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2008), 152–5.

And Haman replies:

You seem to me a child	ניפון את עליי
Were I to open my scrolls	אין פתחית מגליי
there would be no end to my words	לית סוף למיליי
Your heart was faint	נפשך זעירה
snorting like a pig	ונחור כחזירה
when your host was routed by the (full) moon	דאוכלוסך אזלון בזהרה
You thought yourself God	נפשך דמית באלה
and wished to be worshipped	ובעית למהוי פלח
above the one you worship	על מן דאת בה פלח ¹¹

Up to this point in the poem, the figures have appeared in chronological order: Nimrod, Pharaoh, Amalek, Sisera, Goliath, and Zerah the Ethiopian. However, the next section, in which Jesus appears, disrupts the poem's scheme. First and foremost, Jesus is not an historical figure from the Old Testament as the other figures are, and his insertion between Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar interferes with the chronological order, stressing even more the uniqueness of his representation.¹² Another anomaly of the "Jesus section" is its ending; in the rest of the composition we find at the end of each section the formula "said + the name of the disputant" (cf. "Said Sennacherib" above). By contrast, at the end of the "Jesus section", the formula is absent.¹³ We may therefore conclude that a structural analysis of the poem already reveals that the depiction of Jesus stands out. Let us turn now to a detailed analysis of Jesus's words on the cross:

You think of yourself	סבר את בגרמך
that you were crucified alone	דאת צלב לגרמך
but I shared your fate	ואנא שותף עימך

¹¹ Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 214–5.

¹² J. Yahalom, "Angels Do Not Understand Aramaic: On the Literary Use of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47 (1996): 42, 44. Yahalom takes the opposite position and suggests that "the poet hoped, by this sleight of hand, to avoid drawing too much attention to this sensitive subject and awakening the ire of the authorities" (42).

¹³ We do find the words "אמר פלוני" (said so-and-so) copied in the manuscript. However, this is most probably an emendation of the scribe or another individual who felt that something was missing and sought to supplement the "missing part" The view that these words are an emendation is confirmed by the metrical analysis of the poem. In all other sections, the formula is an integral part of the rhythmic scheme whereas in this case it is not. For a similar assessment see Sivan, *Palestine*, 153, note 29. On the intriguing epithet for Jesus, i.e., פלוני, see: Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 217.

Nailed to a pole and my image in the Mercury [house] is painted on wood	סמיר על קיס ודמותי במרקוליס מצויר על קיס
He nailed me to a pole my flesh gashed wide and [I am] the son of a carpenter	סמרי על קיס ובשרי לטופח נקיס ובר נגיד בקיס
Scourged with a whip of woman born and they called me Christ	סכיף באיסקוטוס מן אתא זיניטוס וקרון יתי כריסטוס
Nailed with spikes driven into my limbs the barley eater is better off than me	סמר במסמרין בגפיי מסמרין טב מני אכל שערין
The end of piercing is to be given to dishonor in town and country	סופיה די נקיבת עבדין בהתה בכל אתר ומדינתה ¹⁴

These lines are clearly based on the New Testament accounts of the Passion,¹⁵ but at the same time they expand them considerably. In fact, the expansion of biblical scenes by means of “imaginative speeches” is a celebrated trait of late antique poetry,¹⁶ nonetheless such expansion of Jesus’s Passion is intriguing since he is not the typical “biblical” figure in Jewish literature, to say the least.

A detailed analysis of the poem will continue to reveal its uniqueness. The opening strophe provides the basis for the juxtaposition of Haman and Jesus; according to the poet they were both crucified. Indeed, the notion that Haman was crucified, and not simply hanged on the gallows as in the biblical narrative, represents a long-standing tradition that goes back at least to the times of the Septuagint.¹⁷

¹⁴ Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 216–7.

¹⁵ From the literary viewpoint, it is interesting to see that the use of Aramaic in the Greek text of the New Testament (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34) is paralleled in the poem. On the role of Greek in this poem see note 25 below.

¹⁶ See: S. Harvey, “Spoken Words, Voiced Silence: Biblical Women in Syriac Tradition,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9/1 (2001): 105–31; O. Münz-Manor, “All about Sarah: Questions of Gender in Yannai’s Poems on Sarah’s (and Abraham’s) Barrenness,” *Prooftexts—A Journal of Jewish Literary History* 26/3 (2006): 344–74.

¹⁷ See: T. Thornton, “Crucifixion of Haman and the Scandal of the Cross,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1986): 419–26. Andrea Damascelli argued that in Galatians 3:13 Paul intentionally describes Jesus as Haman. See: idem, “Croce, maledizione e redenzione: un’eco di Purim in Galati 3,13,” *Henoch* 23 (2001): 227–41. It is worth noting that in the verse from Galatians, Jesus is hanged and not crucified. The phenomenon is attested in other early Christian literature as well, for instance in Acts

Behind this intriguing tradition stands the idea that the two figures were executed during Passover, as Israel Yuval has pointed out.¹⁸ At any rate, already in the opening strophe we encounter the dual nature of the description; Jesus and Haman are placed side-by-side in what appears to be an adversarial relationship, yet Jesus is given the opportunity to relate his suffering in the first person. The “parrhesia” given here to Jesus is by no means ordinary; to the best of my knowledge it does not exist in any other Jewish source from Byzantine Palestine (or elsewhere).¹⁹ The next two strophes depict Jesus on the cross; the meaning of the term מרקוליס in the second strophe is not clear cut. It may denote a church, as Yahalom and Sokoloff have suggested,²⁰ but may alternately refer to a place of worship in general. At any rate, Jesus seems to refer (anachronistically, to be sure) to the depiction of the crucifixion scene, and the rather neutral tone of the description underscores the uniqueness of this poem. In the third strophe we find Jesus’s noteworthy statement that he is the son of a carpenter,²¹ a statement that goes hand in hand with Matthew 13:55: “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” Moreover, the poet refrains from the opportunity to claim that Jesus was the son of a Roman soldier, a notorious Jewish claim that is recorded, for instance, in Origen’s *Contra Celsum*. The Jews, according to Origen’s account, claim that “when she [=Mary] was pregnant she was turned out of doors by the carpenter to whom

5:30: “The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.”

¹⁸ See: Yuval, *Two Nations*, 166–7, 230. For the correlation between Purim and Passover see also: M. Wechsler, “The Purim-Passover Connection: A Reflection of Jewish Exegetical Tradition in the Peshitta Book of Esther,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117/2 (1998): 321–7.

¹⁹ For a detailed survey of the representations of Jesus in the rabbinic literature of the period see: P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, 2007).

²⁰ Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 216.

²¹ It was Menachem Kister who first drew my attention to the possibility that the phrase might be interpreted as “carpenter.” The Aramaic text reads בר נגיד בקיס, literally “the son of one who pulls wood.” In their commentary to this verse, Yahalom and Sokoloff suggest that Jesus is referring to the Cross he is carrying. However, the meaning “carpenter” seems to be the most likely for several reasons. First, because of the rhyme -קיס the poet could not simply use the Aramaic word for “carpenter” (נגרא) but had to introduce some kind of periphrastic expression, such as נגיד בקיס (נגרא). Second, the combination נגיד + noun serves in the Aramaic dialect of the poem to denote a profession, for instance נגיד בקשתא “archer” (See: M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* [Ramat Gan, 2002], 340). Third, it is also possible the the phrase should be read בר נגיר בקיס, i.e., “the son of a wood carpenter.” The letters ד and ר often interchange in manuscripts and indeed the phrase נגרות קיסא is attested in this Aramaic dialect) idem., 341 [under נגרות].

she had been betrothed, as having been guilty of adultery, and that she bore a child to a certain soldier named Panthera.”²² Interestingly enough, the poet’s keen juxtaposition of carpentry and the wooden cross is known elsewhere from Patristic literature, for instance in the fourth chapter of the ‘Homily on the Lord’ of Ephrem, the fourth-century Syrian Church Father and celebrated poet, who writes: “This is the Son of the skillful carpenter who set up His cross over all-consuming Sheol and conducted humanity over to the place of life.”²³

The next strophe poses (again) significant philological and interpretative problems. Since the expression *מִן אִתָּא זִינִיטוּס* is incomprehensible, Yahalom and Sokoloff suggest emending the text to *מִן אִתָּא גִינִיטוּס* “of woman born.” They furthermore assert that this claim mocks the figure of Jesus by negating his divine nature.²⁴ Another intriguing element in this strophe is the use of the Greek word *Χριστός* “Christ,” a word that contemporary Jewish authors conspicuously refrain from using. It is worthwhile mentioning in this context that the fusion of Christianized Greek and Aramaic is known elsewhere in this poetical corpus; most notable are the uses of *קִירִיס* (*Κύριος*) as an epithet for God, *נומוס* (*νόμος*) to denote the Torah and *אליסון* (*ἐλέησον*), the famous liturgical formula.²⁵ The next two strophes essentially develop the same theme, as Jesus continues to relate his misfortunes. In the first of these two strophes we note that the comparison with the barley eater has an unmistakably humorous quality and in the second the mention of the “annual dishonor” (an anachronism again) reaffirms the link between Jesus and Haman and provides a fine closure to the entire unit.

²² Book I, Chapter 32. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. H. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1965), 111. On the whole issue see: J. McGrath, “Was Jesus Illegitimate? The Evidence of his Social Interactions,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 5/1 (2007): 81–100.

²³ *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works*, trans. E. Mathews Jr. and J. Amar (Washington D.C., 1994), 280. The same idea is conveyed in Ephrem’s Hymns on Faith 17:11.

²⁴ Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 217. The editors’ emendation and translation are questionable, but even if they are correct it should be noted that Jesus’s description as being “of woman born” is not likely to be pejorative. Attacks on the divinity of Jesus were aimed at the question of the father, not the mother (see note 22 above).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42–5; Kister, *Aramaic*, 108–10. It should be stressed that contemporary poetry in Hebrew refrains almost completely from using Greek vocabulary. See: S. Elizur, “The Incorporation of Aramaic Elements in Ancient Palestinian Piyutim,” *Leshonenu* 70 (2008): 337–9 (Hebrew); Yahalom, *Poetry and Society*, 42–50; Heineman, *Targum Tradition*, 156–7.

I have already mentioned that the poem is structured in accordance with a dialogic pattern, according to which Haman answers each figure's complaints and rebuts them. But in the section dedicated to Jesus this structure breaks down. Haman just "listens" to Jesus's complaints; he neither justifies the crucifixion, nor does he tell Jesus that he is a wicked man:²⁶

Caesar asked me
What's to be done to a chief
who delivered my enemy

ענא יתי קיסר
מה איתעבד לחד שר
דסנאוי לי מסר

The fool (then) told me
Take the crown and the horse trappings
and mount Mordechai the Jew

ענה יתי בורייה
סב כלילא ולבוש סוסייא
וארכב מרדכי יהודייה

I obeyed like a slave
who hears and obeys
said Haman

עבידית היך עבד
דשמע ועבד
אמר המן²⁷

We can conclude then that this poem represents Jesus in a way that combines mockery with a genuine description of his pain. The mildness of the description and the empathic overtone become clearer in light of similar depictions in the late antique Aramaic versions of the *Toledot Yeshu*, a text that beyond any doubt scorns and ridicules the Gospels. In the crucifixion scene, to give the most appropriate example, we find a grotesque depiction of Jesus crucified on a stalk of cabbage.²⁸ The *Toledot Yeshu* leaves no place for doubt; when Jewish authors wanted to ridicule and parody Christian narratives they knew exactly how to do so.²⁹

²⁶ Yahalom and Sokoloff note in their commentary that "these lines differ from the scheme of the rest of the poem as they deal with Haman himself and there are no replies to the words of his predecessor [=Jesus]," Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 217.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 218–9.

²⁸ H. Newman, "The Death of Jesus in the 'Toledot Yeshu' Literature," *Journal of Theological Studies* 50/1 (1999): 59–79.

²⁹ Compare also Peter Schäfer's conclusions regarding the representation of Jesus in the Babylonian Talmud: "they [=Babylonian Jews] fought back with the means of parody, inversion, deliberate distortion... Taken together, the texts in the Babylonian Talmud, although fragmentary and scattered, become a daring and powerful counter-Gospel to the New Testament in general and to John in particular." (Schäfer, *Jesus*, 129).

III. ZERESH AT THE CROSS

This poem also employs imagined speech as its main rhetorical device; Zeresh, otherwise a marginal figure in the book of Esther, stands at the focal point of the piece that relates to us her lament over the death of her ten sons. Similar to the first poem, this composition reveals an ambivalent attitude towards its protagonist; Zeresh's sincere grief is powerfully narrated while she is mocked at the same time.³⁰ From the literary viewpoint this ambivalence is best shown in the intriguing combination of the sincere grief conveyed by Zeresh's words and the gloating voice of the narrator that intervenes in the narrative time and again. Here are the opening strophes of the poem:

When the ten children
of Haman were crucified
Zeresh wailed
and screamed at the sight

[It's] the violence of Haman
who laid a snare for us
Every year, at all times
it is said, Cursed be Haman

אמת די אצטלבו
עשרתי בנוי דהמן
אייללת זרש
וצווחת תמן

בייא מן המן
דפח לן טמן
בכל שנה ובכל זמן
אמרין ארור המן³¹

These introductory strophes narrate Zeresh's tragic downfall and once more substitute crucifixion for hanging. In the second strophe the poem departs from the biblical narrative and depicts Zeresh as criticizing Haman and blaming him for her disaster. This criticism, alongside the fact that Zeresh laments only the death of her children (and not that of her husband) is fascinating; in so doing the poet inverts the hierarchy of the biblical account, where Haman is the primary negative character whereas Zeresh's role is marginal. In this way Zeresh and her sons become victims of Haman, and it is therefore easier for the listener (or reader) to identify with their sorrows.

³⁰ Here too Yahalom describes Zeresh's lament as a parody and notes that the same applies already to the lament of Sisera's mother in Judges 5:28 (Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 29.) With regard to this view of the biblical poem it is appropriate to quote the following words: "The mourning 'other,' mother of Sisera, whose pain includes sorrow for the women's suffering and opens new meaning for lines that have conventionally been interpreted as gloating at the mortification of the enemy women." See: G. Hasan-Rokem, T. Hess and S. Kaufman, eds., *The Defiant Muse: Hebrew Feminist Poems from Antiquity to the Present: A Bilingual Anthology* (New York, 1999), 3-4.

³¹ Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 196-7.

After these two introductory strophes comes the lament proper, wherein Zeresh bewails each and every one of her children.³² Thus for instance in the next strophe Zeresh's distressing sorrow is related:

Flown from my palace
are my ten fledglings
And my heart in my breast
within me is melted

פרחון מן פלטין דידי
עשרתי גוזליי
וליבי וכולייתי
לגו מנו מסיי³³

The powerful metaphor of the mother-bird and her fledglings at the beginning of the strophe sets the dominant melancholic tone of the entire composition. Accordingly, in the second half of the strophe Zeresh's distress is powerfully depicted by means of an allusion to Psalm 22:15: "My heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast." Placing the plaintive words of the psalmist in the mouth of Zeresh is undoubtedly a remarkable rhetorical move. One should remember, of course, that Psalms 22 opens with the verse: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (אלי אלי למה עזבתני), a verse that Jesus recited on the Cross, as was mentioned earlier in the analysis of the first poem. The whole psalm is interpreted in Christian literature as the words of Jesus on the Cross, making the allusion to it in our poem even more intriguing.³⁴ Moreover, in several Jewish texts from Late Antiquity, Psalm 22 is interpreted as alluding to Esther, above all doubt the heroine of the story, and this juxtaposition adds, in its own way, to the positive description of Zeresh.³⁵

The following strophe presents Zeresh sitting alone in her house:

Bereft I sit
of all my kin

צדייה אנה יתיבה
מן כל אוכלסיי

³² Note that Zeresh is not only the religious *other* but also *other* from the perspective of gender. One manifestation of the latter aspect is the association of women with the genre of dirge, an association that was well established in Late Antiquity. See: M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (New York, 2002); G. Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature* (London, 1992); G. Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature* (Stanford, 2000), 108–29.

³³ Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 198–9.

³⁴ See: Christian Amphoux, "Le Psaume 21 (22 TM) dans le Nouveau Testament," in *David, Jésus et la reine Esther—Recherches sur le Psaume 21 (22 TM)*, ed. Gilles Dorival (Paris, 2002), 145–64; Gilles Dorival, "L'interprétation ancienne du Psaume 21 (22 TM)," *ibid.*, 225–314.

³⁵ P. Cassuto and G. Dorival, "Les textes rabbiniques sur le Psaume" 21 (TM 22), *ibid.*, 165–224; E. Menn, "No Ordinary Lament: Relecture and the Identity of the Distressed in Psalm 22," *The Harvard Theological Review* 93/4 (2000): 317–27.

Woe to her and her lot
for her son Arisai

ויילה ומה מטתה
על ברה אריסיי³⁶

A similar description reappears elsewhere in the poem:

Bereft I sit
of a corner [of my own]
I and my household
given over to plunder

שמימה אנה יתיבה
מן כל זוייתה
אנה ובייתה
מסירין לבזתה³⁷

In these strophes we find the poet using biblical verses in order to mediate Zeresh's pain, in this case by alluding to descriptions of the destruction of Jerusalem (such as Jeremiah 9:10 or 34:22). In the second half of the second strophe, we find a striking example of the adoption of Zeresh's viewpoint by the poet, a viewpoint that completely contradicts the biblical narrative. The Book of Esther explicitly declares three times that the Jews did not lay their hands on the plunder (Esther 9:10, 15–16), yet in the poem Zeresh is preoccupied with the risk of plunder.

The next strophe reveals two more intriguing elements that contribute to the overall impression of the poem:

She wound a rope round her neck
and strangled herself, the harlot
Woe to her and her lot
for her son Vaizatha

תלת חבלה בקדלה
וחנקת גרמה זניתה
ויילה ומה מטת
על ברה ויזתא³⁸

Here the narrator's voice plays a major role; the strophe opens with a description of the hanged Zeresh, who is here called a harlot (זניתה). This charged word is negative, to be sure, yet its use in the biblical description of the destruction of Jerusalem³⁹ adds a much more nuanced attitude towards Zeresh, who is depicted, once more in the poem, in a manner similar to the personified Jerusalem. Furthermore, the tradition regarding Zeresh's suicide is remarkable since it does not appear in any other Jewish text known to me. This unique tradition is very close in nature to a midrash in *Lamentation Rabbah* that relates a story about a woman named Miriam who commits suicide after her seven sons were executed by the emperor. This midrashic

³⁶ Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 198–9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 200–1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Cf. Isaiah 1:21: "How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers."

account is part of a larger literary unit about women bearing the name Miriam (or Martha), a unit that is connected to Marian traditions, as has been observed by Galit Hasan-Rokem.⁴⁰ The intertextual linkage between Zeresh and the midrashic Miriam, the Christian interpretation of Psalm 22, and the recurring depiction of the crucifixion of the ten sons suggest that behind the figure of Zeresh lamenting her sons stands the figure of Mary lamenting Jesus. The cult of the Virgin has its roots in Byzantine Palestine and a fair amount of liturgical (as well as other) texts is dedicated to depictions of her at the Cross.⁴¹ Interestingly enough, we even have a fascinating description, in the so-called “Piacenza Pilgrimage” from the second half of the sixth century, which relates to us an ambivalent attitude on the part of the Jews towards Mary. The Jewish women of Nazareth declare, according to the pilgrim, that “this [=their beauty] is Saint Mary’s gift to them, for they also say that she was a relative of theirs. Though there is no love lost between Jews and Christians,” the traveler notes, “these women are full of kindness. This province is like paradise.”⁴²

IV. THE POEMS, PURIM, AND CARNIVALESQUE AMBIVALENCE

From what we have seen until now, we can conclude that the two poems reveal a literary ambivalence with regard to the representation of Christian figures. Such ambivalence towards these religious *others* is related, I would argue, to the fact that the poems were performed during Purim. There is disagreement between scholars with regard to the

⁴⁰ Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life*, 114–25. It is intriguing to find in later Byzantine literature descriptions of Mary’s suicidal wishes; see: A. Margaret, “The Lament of the Virgin in Byzantine Literature and Modern Greek Folk Songs,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 1 (1975): 111–40.

⁴¹ J. Ledit, *Marie dans la Liturgie Byzantine* (Paris, 1976); J. Grosdidier De Matons, *Romanos Le Mélode et les Origines de la Poésie Religieuse à Byzance* (Paris, 1977), 159–98. On Mary’s cult in Late Antiquity see now: S. Shoemaker, “Epiphanius of Salamis, the Kollyridians, and the Early Dormition Narratives: The Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16/3 (2008): 371–401.

⁴² On the pilgrim see C. Milani, *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini: Un Viaggio in Terra Santa del 560–570 d.C.* (Milan, 1977). For the text see P. Geyer, ed., *Itineraria et alia geographica*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 175 (Turnhout, 1965), 131. On the entire passage as reflecting a Christian-Jewish “tourist” collaboration see J. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish Christian Origins* (Oxford, 1993), 228–9.

exact roots of this feast,⁴³ nevertheless there is a general consensus that it is connected to Near-Eastern festivals with distinct carnivalesque spirit.⁴⁴ While we do not know precisely how the feast was celebrated during the Second Temple period,⁴⁵ in Rabbinic Judaism the nature of the feast becomes more defined. In the Mishna a separate tractate is dedicated to the feast, although it deals primarily with questions that relate to the liturgical reading of the Book of Esther and related subjects. But the Babylonian Talmud in tractate Megillah preserves a revealing maxim with regard to the carnivalesque spirit and transgression of everyday norms during Purim: "Raba said: It is the duty of a man to mellow himself [with wine] on Purim until he cannot tell the difference between 'cursed be Haman' and 'blessed be Mordecai.'"⁴⁶ The story that follows reveals, however, that at least one sage was dissatisfied with such an approach: "Rabbah and R. Zera joined together in a Purim feast. They became mellow, and Rabbah arose and cut R. Zera's throat. On the next day he prayed on his behalf and revived him. Next year he said: Will your honor come and will we have the Purim feast together? He replied: A miracle does not take place on every occasion." It should be noted that other cultural inversions and

⁴³ We do not know much about the feast of Purim in Antiquity. Most scholars agree, however, that the Book of Esther, dated probably to the fifth or fourth century B.C.E., is an etiological text that provides an "historical" foundation for a long-standing festive tradition. A useful presentation of the general approaches to the origins and developments of Purim can be found in: J. Rubenstein, "Purim, Liminality, and Comunitas," *AJS Review* 17/2 (1992): 247-9. On the historical background of the feast see: S. Grayzel, "The Origins of Purim," in *The Purim Anthology*, ed., P. Goodman (Philadelphia, 1973), 3-13.

⁴⁴ The Book of Esther itself exemplifies what might be called "the poetics of reversal." Rubenstein, *Communitas*, 252-3.

⁴⁵ Some scholars have even suggested that Purim was not celebrated at all during this period. See for example the claims made by A. Oppenheimer, "The Historical Approach: A Clarification," *Zion* 61/2 (1996): 227-9 (Hebrew). For the opposite attitude see: B. Bar-Kochva, "On the Festival of Purim and Some of the Succot Practices in the Period of the Second Temple and Afterwards," *Zion* 62/4 (1997): 387-402 (Hebrew), and Oppenheimer's response, "Love of Mordechai or Hatred of Haman? Purim in the Days of the Second Temple and Afterwards," *ibid.*, 408-18 (Hebrew). For Bar-Kochva's final response see: B. Bar-Kochva, "The Festival of Purim in the Period of the Second Temple and the Scroll of Esther in Asia: Historical Approach and Orthodox Approach," *Sinai* 121 (1998): 37-85 (Hebrew).

⁴⁶ But compare the following verses from a late antique liturgical poem (*Piyyut*) written in Hebrew: "Cursed be Haman, who sought to destroy me; Blessed be Mordecai, the Jew; Accursed be Zeresh, the wife of him that terrified me; Blessed be Esther, my protectress," A. Milgrom, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia, 1971), 274. On this poem in particular and on the descriptions of Haman in the Hebrew liturgical poems for Purim see: Münz-Manor, *Other Voices*, 71-3 and note 54 below.

violent transgressions during the feast of Purim are known to us,⁴⁷ and in fact the same applies to other Christian and pagan festivals in the late antique Near East.⁴⁸

In order to fully understand how the Purim poems discussed above fit into the carnivalesque context of the festival, I shall turn to Mikhail Bakhtin's groundbreaking work on the medieval carnival.⁴⁹ Bakhtin writes at length about *carnivalesque ambivalence* and argues that the carnival's "celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions."⁵⁰ Moreover, Bakhtin points to two other features of the carnival that are relevant to the Aramaic poems. Firstly, he asserts that carnivalesque laughter is "also directed at those who laugh. The people do not exclude themselves from the wholeness of the world."⁵¹ This characteristic is best exemplified in the present case by the fact that the Aramaic poems mock the prestigious poetic genres of the synagogue's official poetry, namely the Admonition (תּוֹכַחָה), recited during the Day of Atonement, and the Lament (קִינָה) for the Ninth of Av.⁵² Secondly, Bakhtin stresses the fact that "the official feast asserted that all was stable, unchanging, perennial: the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political and moral values, norms, and prohibitions... this is why the tone of the official feast was monolithically serious and why the element of laughter was alien to it."⁵³ In complete accord with Bakhtin's view, we find that in the Hebrew liturgical poetry for Purim the serious tone prevails and no parodic laughter can be heard.⁵⁴ Bakhtin stresses the subversive traits of the carnival whereas other scholars have highlighted the manner in which it reinforces the norms of society.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ See: E. Horowitz, "The Rite to Be Reckless: On the Perpetration and Interpretation of Purim Violence," *Poetics Today* 15/1 (1994): 23–9; idem., *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton, 2006), 248–78; Rubenstein, *Communitas*.

⁴⁸ J. Watt and G. Greatrex, "One, Two or Three Feasts? The Brytae, the Maiuma and the May Festival of Edessa", *Oriens Christianus* 83 (1999): 1–21.

⁴⁹ The use of the Bakhtinian analysis is limited, of course, to his phenomenological observations, as there are many differences between the late antique feast and the developed medieval carnival.

⁵⁰ M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Bloomington, 1984), 10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵² Yahalom and Sokoloff, *Aramaic Poetry*, 28–33.

⁵³ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 9.

⁵⁴ See: Münz-Manor, *Other Voices*, 71–3. See also notes 8 and 46 above.

⁵⁵ See for instance the following observation made by Umberto Eco: "In this sense, comedy and carnival are not instances of real transgressions: on the contrary, they

It seems, then, that the double nature of the carnival in general and of Purim in particular perfectly fits the poems under discussion. On the one hand they transgress the accepted boundaries, but on the other they reinforce them.⁵⁶ The unique representation of Christian figures in these Aramaic poems shows then that the treatment of the Christian *other* was dynamic and at any rate not one-dimensional. Daniel Boyarin has summarized this attitude in the following manner: “they [=the Rabbis] are, we might say, both recognizing and denying at one and the same time that Christians are us, marking out the virtual identity between themselves and the Christians in their world at the same time that they are very actively seeking to establish difference.”⁵⁷ To conclude—in this essay I have attempted to provide further evidence of the multifaceted nature of Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity and to claim, moreover, that the large corpus of poetry from this period should be an integral part of discussions of the subject.

represent paramount examples of law reinforcement. They remind us of the existence of the rule.” U. Eco, “The Frames of Comic Freedom,” in *Carnival! (Approaches to Semiotics 64)*, ed., T. Sebeok (Berlin, 1984), 6. Compare also Rubenstein, *Communitas*, 273. A useful presentation of the different approaches to carnival can be found in: M. Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages—The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor, 1996), 182–94.

⁵⁶ Rubenstein has made the same point with regard to Purim; see: Rubenstein, *Communitas*, 273.

⁵⁷ D. Boyarin, *Dying for God—Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, 1999): 32.

THE VIEW OF BYZANTINE JEWS IN ISLAMIC AND EASTERN CHRISTIAN SOURCES

Yossi Soffer

A few pieces of information exist on the history of Byzantine Jewry in Islamic and Eastern Christian sources.¹ In modern research these documents are usually considered marginal when compared to Jewish sources or Greek Byzantine ones, and are consequently accorded only limited attention. Furthermore, they are evaluated without any reference to the literary context in which they were produced. More concretely, they have not undergone the recent process of literary criticism that has occurred in the case of Byzantine sources on Byzantine Jews, as well as in the field of Byzantine-Islamic relations. The purpose of the present study is to reassess the contribution of these sources to our knowledge of Byzantine Jewry in the light of recent methodological approaches that accord importance to the construction of alterity as a means for the construction of a self-image.

After presenting the necessary methodological considerations (in section 1), I shall offer a general typology of the image of the Jews in Islamic and Eastern Christian sources (in section 2).² In the last section I shall discuss the forced baptism of the Jews by Emperor Leo III as a case study for examining the potential contribution of Eastern non-Byzantine sources to the study of Jewish Byzantine history.

¹ The texts were part of the systematic compilation and analysis of sources pertaining to Byzantine Jewry in J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire 641–1204* (New York, 1939) [henceforth: Starr, *Jews*]; S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium (1204–1453)* (Tuscaloosa, 1985) [henceforth: Bowman, *Jews*]. They were the subject of a number of studies by A. Sharf. See his *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London, 1971) [henceforth: Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*], as well as his collected studies in *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium* (Ramat Gan, 1995) [henceforth: Sharf, *Jews*]. Other studies that made use of the sources are mentioned throughout the present survey.

² I shall not deal with Judeo-Arabic materials, which demand a separate study, in itself dependant on the progress of research of the Genizah documents.

I. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the past few decades, Byzantine studies have undergone a significant methodological shift. Side-by-side with the ongoing efforts to increase the amount of textual and archaeological evidence of the history of Byzantium and the efforts to interpret this evidence for a better knowledge of Byzantine history, a growing tendency to study the mechanisms of representation produced within the Byzantine world and their functions has appeared. Studies have included the shifting conceptions within Byzantine society,³ as well as the dynamic views of otherness in Byzantium.⁴ Particularly relevant to the present essay are studies of Byzantine views of the Jews living within the empire. Prior to the methodological shift, studies of Byzantine Jewry sought to penetrate the reality of Jewish life in Byzantium.⁵ Current approaches, however, seek to portray the image of Jews as it emerges in different literary genres and corpora—both Christian and Jewish—and to evaluate the function of that image within each genre, and the contribution of that image to our knowledge of the authors, rather than of Jewish life in and of itself.⁶

A parallel methodological shift has also been made with regard to Muslim-Byzantine interactions, that is, both Muslim attitudes

³ See but a few examples in Av. Cameron "Byzantium and the Past in the Seventh Century: The Search for Redefinition," in *Le septième siècle: changements et continuités/The Seventh Century: Change and Continuity*, eds., J. Fontaine and J. Hillgarth (London, 1992), 250–76; and, with regard to Iconoclasm, P. Brown, "A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy," in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, ed., P. Brown (Berkeley, 1982), 251–301.

⁴ See the programmatic words by H. Ahrweiler, "L'image de l'autre et les mécanismes de l'altérité," in *Rapports: XVI^e congrès international des sciences historiques* (Stuttgart, 1985), I, 60–6.

⁵ See in particular the studies by Starr and Sharf mentioned in note 1 above.

⁶ See numerous articles in the present volume, in particular the contributions by R. Fishman-Duker and V. von Falkenhausen. For a discussion of the Jews' own sense of identity see N. De Lange, "Hebrews, Greeks or Romans? Jewish Culture and Identity in Byzantium," in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, ed., D. Smythe (Aldershot, 2000), 105–18. For an exemplary debate over the function of Jewish image within seventh century Byzantine discourse see D. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia, 1994); Av. Cameron, "Byzantines and Jews: Some Recent Work on Early Byzantium," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 249–74; eadem, "Blaming the Jews: The Seventh-Century Invasions of Palestine in Context," *Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (Paris, 2002): 57–78. See in the same context also V. Déroche, "Polemique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'Islam," *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 57 (1999): 141–99.

towards Byzantium⁷ and Byzantine attitudes to Islam.⁸ New studies aim to define, categorize, and explain the image of the Other as it was shaped in Byzantine and Islamic sources, against the historical and cultural background in which they were produced, and in accordance with the literary conventions and genres by which the texts were modeled. Thus, the focus of the studies has been the history of the mutual images, rather than the history of actual contacts between the Byzantine and Islamic cultures.⁹

Yet, no parallel approach has been implemented on the Muslim and Eastern-Christian evidence pertaining to Byzantine Jewry. Up until the present, the relevant Islamic and Christian Arabic texts were used in existing research to explain Jewish reality in the Byzantine Empire.¹⁰ Furthermore, they were accorded marginal importance only, and were usually used to support and corroborate hypotheses that were first and foremost fashioned by Greek or Jewish sources.¹¹ Scholars have stressed the geographic remoteness of the non-Byzantine authors, but hardly referred to the different cultural context in which they were writing.¹² In order to be able to adopt or reject the Eastern evidence

⁷ A significant contribution to the subject matter was made in the numerous essays by Ahmad Shboul. See specifically A. Shboul, "Arab Islamic Perceptions of Byzantine Religion and Culture," in *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions*, ed., J.-J. Waardenburg (New York, 1999), 122–35; idem, "Arab Attitudes towards Byzantium: Official, Learned, Popular," *Essays Presented to Joan Hussey for Her Eightieth Birthday* (Porphyrogenitus, 1988), 111–29. N. El-Cheikh's recent book, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, 2004) [henceforth: El-Cheikh, *Byzantium*] is the most up-to-date study of Islamic writing on Byzantium. Cf. studies that focus upon Eastern (both Muslim and Christian) sources as sources for new data on Byzantium, rather than as sources that reflect Eastern *images* of Byzantium, e.g. S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III* (Louvain, 1973); idem, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V* (Louvain, 1977).

⁸ See e.g. A. Ducellier, *Le miroir de l'Islam: musulmans et chrétiens d'Orient au Moyen âge (VII^e–XI^e siècles)* (Paris, 1971); idem, *Chrétiens d'Orient et Islam au Moyen âge: VII^e–XV^e siècle* (Paris, 1996).

⁹ See e.g. the words in El-Cheikh, *Byzantium*, 5–6: "The project in the present endeavor, however, is not to confirm or refute a core of data about historical Byzantium and early Islam but to study the contribution of this Arabic-Islamic corpus to the discourse on Byzantium."

¹⁰ E.g., in the studies by Starr and Sharf mentioned in note 1 above.

¹¹ See section III below for a detailed example.

¹² For instance, Starr and Sharf refer to the Islamic context of writing only when it clearly emerges from the texts, e.g. when Muslim sources clearly use Islamic terms. See for instance their allusion to the description of a certain Byzantine tax with the term *jizyah*, used in Islamic law for indicating the Islamic poll tax conferred upon non-Muslims under Muslim rule: Starr, *Jews*, 13; Sharf, *Jews*, 68 n. 82.

about Byzantine Jewry on a solid methodological basis, a whole re-evaluation of the Eastern sources is needed.

The purpose of the present paper, therefore, is to examine the sources concerning Byzantine Jewry that originated in the Islamic world as literary products resulting from the varied literary genres and ideological agendas in which their authors participated. Such an examination is based, on the one hand, on the general view of the Jews in such sources, and, on the other hand, on the sources' view of Byzantium. As we shall see in the following section, non-Byzantine and non-Jewish sources comprise a double cultural remoteness from the subject of their reports: They are culturally remote from the Byzantine world and are significantly remote from the way the Byzantines perceived and constructed Jewish Otherness. For these Eastern sources, the Byzantine Jews constitute, as it were, "the Other's others." We first need to evaluate this double remoteness before we can evaluate the ways in which we can make use of the Eastern documents as historical sources.

II. THE CONTEXTS OF EASTERN PERCEPTIONS OF BYZANTINE JEWRY

The views of Muslims and Eastern Christians are shaped by different paradigms, both religious and conceptual. Islamic sources reflect the world view of the conqueror, the dominant ruler; their approach to the Jews is fashioned in accordance with Islamic sacred texts and history. Christian sources, on the other hand, integrate "traditional" Christian views of the Jews together with the complex relationships they had, which varied by denomination, with both the Muslim conquerors and the Byzantine empire. Therefore, it is useful to discuss the Muslim and Eastern Christian attitudes separately.

A. *Muslim Perceptions*

Muslim writing on the Jews has always relied first and foremost on the *topoi* pertaining to the Jews in the records of the Muslim community's formative period and its sacred texts, i.e. in the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the early historiographical records of Muhammad's life (*sīrah*) and his military expeditions. References to the Jews are included already in the Qur'an, where the attitude towards them is ambivalent: On the one hand, they are described as believers, while on the other, they are depicted as sinners in general and rivals of Muhammad and the

young Muslim community in particular.¹³ This latter image is much enhanced and emphasized in *sīrah* literature.¹⁴ Muslim sources for the history of the Jews under Islam tend to perpetuate the early Islamic triumphalist attitude to the Jews, and, as a rule, do not go beyond the Muslim ideas of the religious truth and errors of the Jews.¹⁵ The Jews were part of the *dhimmi* community, the community of “protected people,” non-Muslims who were allowed to continue their life under Islamic rule in exchange for a special poll tax (*jizyah*). As a socio-religious group, the Jews did evoke interest in Muslim legal sources that sought to define the belief and practices of the Jews, for the sake of legal classification.¹⁶ But again, the interest hardly transcended the *topoi* already known in the early Islamic formative and canonic literature. The Jews were mentioned in other genres: inter-religious polemics,¹⁷ spiritual religious texts,¹⁸ heresiographies,¹⁹ chronicles and theology, and even ethnographic and geographical writing.²⁰ As a rule, the texts hardly contain any explicit reference to contemporary Jews, and are usually confined to early Muslim archetypes of the Jews.

¹³ U. Rubin, “Jews and Judaism,” *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, General Editor: J. McAuliffe (Washington D.C., 2010), s.v. See also idem, *Between Bible and Qurʾān: The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-Image* (Princeton, 1999); C. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden, 1996) [henceforth: Adang, *Muslim Writers*]; J.-J. Waardenburg, “Muslim Studies of Other Religions,” in *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions*, ed., J.-J. Waardenburg (New York, 1999), 1–69.

¹⁴ U. Rubin, “Muhammad the Exorcist: Aspects of Islamic-Jewish Polemics,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30 (2005): 94–111; M. Schöller, “Sīra and Tafsīr: Muhammad al-Kalbī on the Jews of Medina,” in *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Sources*, ed., H. Motzki (Leiden, 2000), 18–48; idem, *Exegetisches Denken und Prophetenbiographie. Eine quellenkritische Analyse der Sīra-Überlieferung zu Muhammads Konflikt mit den Juden* (Wiesbaden, 1998); A. Wensinck, *Muhammad and the Jews of Medina*, second edition, ed. and trans. W. Behn (Berlin, 1982).

¹⁵ With regard to the Muslim attitude to Jews and Christians, see Waardenburg’s assertion, that, for Muslims, “Their religions were supposed to be sufficiently known” (Waardenburg, op. cit., 23).

¹⁶ For discussions of the Jews in legal context, see Y. Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam* (New York, 2003); N. Tsafir, “The Attitude of Sunni Islam towards Jews and Christians as Reflected in Some Legal Issues,” *Al-Qantara* 26 (2005): 317–36.

¹⁷ For polemics see C. Adang, *Muslim Writers*, especially chapter 3; eadem, “Medieval Muslim Polemics against the Jewish Scriptures,” in Waardenburg, *Muslim Perceptions*, 143–59.

¹⁸ See the evaluation of the presence of non-Muslims in such texts by C. Keller, “Perceptions of Other Religions in Sufism,” in Waardenburg, *Muslim Perceptions*, 181–94.

¹⁹ See e.g. S. Wasserstrom, “Heresiography of the Jews in Mamluk Times,” in Waardenburg, *Muslim Perceptions*, 160–80.

²⁰ See Adang, op. cit. in note 17 above.

When they do refer to contemporary Jews, it is in order to improve the polemical stance against them, or to elaborate the sectarian framework of Judaism, prevalent in historiographic and heresiographic literature (and in itself an instrument for polemics).²¹ Very seldom does one find both accurate and updated information *per se*, without any polemical framework. Such information may be found, if at all, in historiographic and geographical sources.²²

It comes as no surprise, then, that the Muslim references to contemporary Jews outside the Islamic *oikoumene* are scarce. Islamic reports on Byzantine Jewry depend mostly upon the access of Muslim writers to information about the events in Byzantine territory, through travelers, merchants, or even captives.²³ Due to the double cultural remoteness mentioned earlier, and the limited significance of contemporary Jews within the Islamic world, some reports on the Jews may paradoxically contain seemingly objective evidence.²⁴ More commonly, though, they are tinted with the traditional Muslim attitudes to Judaism.²⁵ But,

²¹ See, e.g. the tenth-century historiographer al-Mas'udi, *Kitāb al-tanbīh wal-ishrāf*, ed. M. de Goeje (Leiden, 1894), II, 82f., and see the discussion of the passage in Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 78–9.

²² Salient exceptions are to be found in al-Mas'udi's mention of the Karaites, as well as in the writings of al-Biruni (d. ca. 1050), and see Adang, *Muslim Writers*, 89–94. See also the notes by later authors such as al-Qalqashandi (d. 1418) and Maqrizi (d. 1442) in Wasserstrom, *op. cit.*, 165ff.

²³ On the presence of Muslims and Eastern Christians in Constantinople see first and foremost M. Canard, "Quelques 'à coté' de l'histoire des relations entre Byzance et les arabes," *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida* (Rome, 1956), I, 98–119; idem, "Les expéditions des arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et dans la légende," *Journal Asiatique* 208 (1926): 94–9. See also S. Reinert, "The Muslim Presence in Constantinople, 9th–15th Centuries: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, eds., H. Ahrweiler and A. Laiou (Washington, D.C., 1998), 125–50.

²⁴ Such may be the report by the geographer Zakariyya b. Muhammad al-Qazwini (d. 1283/4) about the equal status of Jews, women, and disabled people in a certain local Byzantine legal practice. See Qazwini, *Āthār al-Bilād wa-Akhbār al-'Ibād* (Beirut, 1960), 610–1. This report functions as a *témoignage volontaire* in the sense described by M. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien* (Paris, 1952), [Cahiers des Annales 3], 23–31.

²⁵ See e.g. the report by Ibn Khurdadhba regarding the poll-tax (*jizyah*) that non-Christian minorities would have to pay to the Byzantine authorities, and his mention of Zoroastrians (*majūs*) as a minority group that exists next to the Jewish one in Byzantine territory at the end of the tenth century. The report may well be a projection on Byzantium of the reality of life of the protected people (*ahl al-dhimmah*) under Islam, about which see N. Roth, "Dhimma: Jews and Muslims in the Early Medieval Period," in *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth*, ed., I. Netton (Leiden, 2000), I, 238–66 and the bibliography mentioned there.

they may be biased also for another reason, i.e. the Muslim attitudes to Byzantium.

In her comprehensive study of the Muslim views of Byzantium,²⁶ Nadia El-Cheikh has suggested a tripartite division of the time span of Islamic and Byzantine co-existence. The early sources belong to an age of “encounter”: from the eighth century, one can find in the early Muslim texts curiosity and respect as to Byzantine monotheism, political order, and cultural heritage; gradually, there emerge more hostile depictions of Byzantium as an inferior entity and as the enemy of Islam *par excellence*. The following age, the “age of struggle,” from the tenth century until the end of the twelfth, is marked by an accentuated opposition between fascination with the Byzantine culture and growing suspicion and fear, due to the successful military campaigns under the direction of the Macedonian dynasty. The third phase, beginning with the fourth-crusade period (until the fall of Byzantium in the hands of the Ottomans in 1453) witnesses pragmatic and amicable relations between the newly restored Byzantine empire and the Egyptian Mamluk state.²⁷ This period is characterized by generally positive references to Byzantium, both in chronicles and in first-hand reports by travelers such as Ibn Battūta. Prejudice and stereotypes give way to a balanced, even sympathetic tone, due to a political alliance and a cultural “reorientation”: the Byzantine Other is less different now; the Byzantines seem more like “us,” as there are other Others who are more threatening to Arab-Muslim identity, namely the Western Crusaders.²⁸

It is important to bear in mind that the Muslim representation of Byzantium does not only simply reflect ideas about Byzantium, but also serves to construct a self-image and to legitimize—or criticize— aspects of this image by referring to Byzantine practices. Thus, in the early Abbasid age we find polemical rhetoric against the Byzantine elite as a means of defining the high moral standards of Muslim leaders; later on, one may use positive depictions of the Byzantines as a means of criticizing rulers and dynasties within *dār al-islām*.²⁹ In this context, mentioning the Jews under Byzantine rule may be part of such formation of self-image.

²⁶ El-Cheikh, *Byzantium*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, *Byzantium*, 197–9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 225–6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 226–7.

After the Crusades, Islamic sources tend to refer to the Jews less as a collective minority under Byzantine rule. Muslims now constituted a significant minority in Byzantine territory, and naturally attracted the attention of Muslim writers, especially geographers and travelers. The Arabs are now the “others” through which Byzantine behavior is explained (and condemned).³⁰ The new age offers factual information about the Jews, usually of a geographic nature,³¹ next to a new type of image: the Jews are referred to more as individuals and less as a group. Reports on Jews under Muslim aegis in Asia Minor still judge the Jews according to what is expected from a *dhimmi* community,³² but reports from the Byzantine territory usually describe Jewish emigrants from Arabic-speaking countries, individuals who function as translators, indeed as mediators between the Byzantine and the Islamic cultures.³³

B. *Eastern Christian Perceptions*

Few studies address the attitude of Eastern Christian sources towards the Jews in general; no particular attention has been paid to Eastern Christian perceptions of Byzantine Jewry. Furthermore, as a rule, only religious literary genres have received scholarly attention as far as the image of the Jews is concerned. One can find only scant scholarly reference to the Jews in Eastern Christian chronicles, for example. As the Greek literature has been surveyed much more than the Syriac one, it is useful to first summarize, in very broad lines, the image of the Jews in Christian literature from Late Antiquity onwards to the Byzantine era. On the basis of the Greek model, we will be able to display the image of the Jews in Eastern Christian literature under Islam.

Byzantine literature contains a set of images of the Jews that is common to various genres—polemics, apologetics, hagiography, and even

³⁰ See e.g. Qazwini, *op. cit.*, 530, who mentions only Christians and Muslims as the inhabitants of al-Rūm. One may add the information about the people of the city of Bashghirt (a city between Constantinople and Bulgaria), where the Muslim minority pays the poll tax to the Christian majority “in the same manner that the Christians (in Muslim territories) pay (it) to the Muslims” (610).

³¹ See e.g. al-Jazari’s report regarding the Jewish quarter in Constantinople, in Bowman, *Jews*, 233 (document 27). See also pp. 254–5 (document 50).

³² See e.g. Bowman, *Jews*, 254 (document 49), where the fourteenth-century traveler Ibn Battutah criticizes Muslims in Asia Minor for their tolerant attitude towards the Jews.

³³ See e.g. the anecdote related by Ibn Battutah in Bowman, *Jews*, 254–5 (document 51).

chronicles, as shown by Rivka Fishman-Duker in her contribution to the present volume. The basic view of the Jews in this literature is ambivalent: on the one hand, the Jews are the ultimate witnesses of the Christian truth, and those who may best grasp the significance of the Christian message. Due to the shared sacred heritage with Christianity, the Jews may most easily be brought under the cross; they are the potential converts to Christianity *par excellence*.³⁴ On the other hand, precisely because of their shared religious heritage, the Jews constitute a grave theological danger: they stubbornly refuse to acknowledge the truth and convert to Christianity;³⁵ they jeopardize the very idea of Christian truth, the credibility of Christianity, its new vocation, and its breach with the Jewish past.³⁶ The Jews are associated with all kinds of Christian heresies, such as Iconoclasm, to name but one. Furthermore, they constitute not only a theological danger to Christian Orthodoxy, but also a social danger to Christian society.³⁷ Gilbert Dagron has demonstrated how the *Judaizantes* were conceived by Byzantine religious elite as a social and practical threat to Byzantine society.³⁸ Thus, the Jews are depicted as deceivers, the emissaries of satanic temptation, or magicians.³⁹ They are also described as the instigators of riots.⁴⁰ The difficulty to draw both theological and social boundaries between Christians and Jews is best manifested in the doubts cast by Byzantine ecclesiastical circles regarding the conversion of Jews, all the more so when forcible baptism was concerned.⁴¹

The Jews are not alone in ecclesiastical and imperial writings: in some cases, other deviating groups are attached to them, such as

³⁴ For hagiography see e.g. Starr, *Jews*, 85f. (document 3), Starr, *Jews*, 119ff. (document 51), Starr, *Jews*, 151 (document 90). For polemics see Starr, *Jews*, 88f. (document 7). Regarding hagiography and homiletics, see G Dagron, "Judaïser," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 360f.

³⁵ For polemics see e.g. Starr, *Jews*, 83ff. (document 1); Starr, *Jews*, 87f. (document 6).

³⁶ Dagron, "Judaïser," 362ff.

³⁷ Starr, *Jews*, 86f. (document 4).

³⁸ Dagron, "Judaïser," 367–369.

³⁹ See Starr, *Jews*, 120 (document 54) for the idea of the Jews as a potential temptation for Christian youngsters. For Jews as magicians and servants of the Devil see Starr, *Jews*, 95f. (document 17).

⁴⁰ See e.g. Starr, *Jews*, 84f. (document 2).

⁴¹ See e.g. Starr, *Jews*, 136ff. (document 74). See also the discussion in Dagron, "Judaïser," 362ff.

pagans,⁴² Manicheans,⁴³ or other Christian heretics.⁴⁴ These “clusters” of anti-Christian manifestations reflect the marginalization of the Jews in Byzantine discourse, law, and society, from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages.⁴⁵ Still, the Jews seem to draw considerable attention in early Byzantine literature. By far the most copious and significant quantities of Byzantine anti-religious polemics and reference to religious otherness relate to the Jews. What is perceived as a deviation from Orthodoxy is branded as a “Judaizing” tendency.⁴⁶

Existing studies of the image of and attitudes towards the Jews in Eastern Christian sources focus on the general religious perception of the Jews in “religious” genres, that is, polemics and apologetics, hagiography and commentaries, from Late Antiquity to the late Middle Ages under Islam. Syriac writings were studied much more than Arabic works.⁴⁷ The “religious” genres present us with a set of Jewish images that is generally similar to the one found in Greek Byzantine literature, due to the simple fact that both literary corpora draw on the same patristic tradition.

As in Byzantine literature, the Jews in Syriac religious writing are the potential bearers of truth: Jewish converts constitute the clearest

⁴² See e.g. Gregory of Nicea, who, along with accusations against Judaizers, speaks against parallel dispositions of Christians towards “Hellenism,” in the sense of Paganism (Dagron, “Judaïser,” 359ff.).

⁴³ See e.g. Starr, *Jews*, 102f. (document 23) for the depiction of Jews as natural companions of other heretics. For the identification of the Iconoclastic impulse with the Jews see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed., C. De Boor (Leipzig, 1883), 401 [henceforth: Theophanes, *Chronographia*]/English translation is quoted from C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford, 1997), 554–5 [henceforth: Mango & Scott]. On the literary link between Jews and heretics see Av. Cameron, “Jews and Heretics: A Category Error?” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds., A. Becker and A. Reed (Tübingen, 2003), 345–60; eadem, “Byzantines and Jews,” op. cit. *supra* n. 2.

⁴⁴ J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Cambridge, 1990), 343ff.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 345ff.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 346.

⁴⁷ Regarding Late Antiquity, see H. Drijvers, “Syrian Christianity and Judaism,” in *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*, eds., J. Lieu et al (London, 1992), 124–46. Regarding later periods see A. Hayman’s introduction to his translation of *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* (Louvain, 1973); A. Hayman, “The Image of the Jews in the Syriac Anti-Jewish Polemical Literature,” in “To See Ourselves as Others See Us”: *Christians, Jews and “Others” in Late Antiquity*, eds., J. Neusner and E. Frerichs (Chico, 1985), 423–41; J. Fiey, “Juifs et chrétiens dans l’orient syriaque,” *Hispania Sacra* 40 (1988): 933–53. Fiey also compares his findings with Greek Byzantine texts concerning the Jews. For Christian Arabic sources, see S. Griffith, “Jews and Muslims in Christian Syriac and Arabic Texts of the Ninth Century,” *Jewish History* 3 (1988): 65–94.

means for expressing the truth of Christianity, indeed of Christian identity.⁴⁸ As in Greek literature, the Jews constitute at the same time both religious and social threats: along with the main accusation of the Jews as Christ-killers, they are characterized as having base moral values, depicted as potential murderers, adulterers, and lawbreakers. They are associated with magicians and sorcerers. This attitude was fashioned not least by Ephraem (d. 373) and John Chrysostom (d. 407),⁴⁹ and is dominant in Syriac literature deep into the first centuries of Islam. Thus, the prevalent attitude towards the Jews is of extreme rejection, the main purpose of which seems to be marking socio-religious boundaries between Christians and Jews.⁵⁰ Jews are depicted at times as part of a whole range of the non-Christian religious others—Jews, pagans, and Arians, in pre-Islamic times, as well as Muslims later on.⁵¹ In these terms, Eastern Christian religious literature in the Islamic era constitutes a continuum of the late antique construction of the Jewish image.

Yet, so far as historiography is concerned, a difference appears between Byzantine presentations of the Jews and Eastern Christian ones. In both cases, the majority of the historiographical works was produced not by laymen but by men of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁵² However, only the Greek writers incorporated the prevalent ecclesiastical and hagiographical perceptions of the Jews into their chronicles. They enjoyed the cooperation between the ruler, the Church, and their own ideology; for them, historical and theological truths were one and

⁴⁸ Cf. M. Martin, "Chrétiens et musulmans à la fin du XII^e siècle," in *Valeur et distance: identités et sociétés en Egypte*, ed., C. Décobert (Paris, 2000), 86–7, for the story told by a twelfth-century Coptic Christian Abu Makarim about a Jewish convert who willingly assimilated into the Egyptian Christian community to the extent of speaking Coptic. At the time Coptic was on the wane and was succeeded by Arabic, which constituted a major cultural threat to the Christian Coptic identity. Hence the importance of Jewish converts not only for Christianity but also for Coptic culture.

⁴⁹ The insight regarding the basic religious Syriac attitude to the Jews appears in Hayman, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ The accusations appear in the eighth-century *Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* (ed. A. Hayman, CSCO vols. 338–339; Louvain, 1973), and their echo appears later on, in the works of Dionysus Bar Salibhi's *Treatise Against the Jews* (ed. J. de Zwaan; Leiden, 1906), written in 1166/7. Hayman ("The Image of the Jews") argues that an alternative, more moderate attitude to the Jews is to be found in the writings of Aphrahat (d. ca. 345) but this attitude was lost under the more extreme one.

⁵¹ Fiey, *op. cit.*

⁵² Regarding the Greek sources see contribution of R. Fishman-Duker to the present volume. The main chronicles of the Eastern Christian world are briefly mentioned and discussed below in section III.

the same. The Jews, for them, never ceased to constitute the Other *par excellence*.

The Eastern Christian authors under Islam operated within a totally different reality. They did not enjoy the similarity between their own positions and the positions of the ruler and the dominant Church. They had to operate in an environment of a non-Christian ruler and a plurality of Christian denominations with no superiority guaranteed for their own. Moreover, the history of the world ceased to be a Christian one; by the tenth century even Melkite-Chalcedonian historians in the world of Islam counted the years according to the reign of the Muslim caliphs, rather than the traditional dating systems—the Alexandrine dating, the dating according to imperial indictions, or the counting of years from the creation of the world or the birth of Jesus.⁵³ The integration between Church history and the history of the Roman empire, most bluntly articulated by Eusebius of Caesarea, had to be dismantled. While Agapius, a tenth-century Chalcedonian bishop of Manbij (Mabbug), still wrote a universal History,⁵⁴ that is, without differentiating between religious and non-religious history, later Monophysite historians expressed a change of consciousness: Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286) wrote two separated histories—a religious one and a secular one; Michael the Syrian (d. 1199), the Monophysite bishop of Antioch, divided his chronicle into three separate columns, each part containing one aspect of reality—ecclesiastical, political and one of miscellaneous reports.⁵⁵ The breach between Christian history and world history had become evident.

It is also important to understand that Eastern Christianity is not monolithic, and includes three main churches: the Melkite Church,

⁵³ M. Rubin, "Arabization Versus Islamization in the Palestinian Melkite Community during the Early Muslim Period," in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land, First-Fifteenth Centuries C.E.*, eds., A Kofsky and G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem, 1998), 155ff.

⁵⁴ Agapius. *Kitāb al-'unwān* ed. and trans. into French by A. Vasiliev (Paris, 1910–1915), vols. 5.4, 7.4, 8.3 and 11.1.

⁵⁵ Michael the Syrian, *Makhtebhānūth zabnhne (Chronique)*, ed. and trans. into French by Jean Baptiste Chabot (Paris, 1899–1924), 4 vols [henceforth: Michael, *Makhtebhānūth*]. For the increasing production of Church histories, rather than comprehensive ones, from the tenth century onwards see S. Samir, "Christian Arabic Literature in the 'Abbasid Period," in *Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period*, eds., M. Young et al. (Cambridge, 1990), 455–9. See also S. Todt, "Die syrische und die arabische Weltgeschichte des Bar Hebraeus—ein Vergleich," *Der Islam* 65 (1988): 60–80.

which consisted of the remaining Chalcedonian Church in the Muslim Empire; the Monophysite churches, mainly the Copts in Egypt and the Syriac-speaking Christians in Syria and Mesopotamia; and the Nestorian Church of the East.⁵⁶ These Christian communities, while sharing a basic set of religious anti-Jewish *topoi* and images in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, differed considerably as to their sense of historical identity and their relations with the Byzantine rulers, the Sassanid Empire and the Islamic Caliphate. The Melkite Chalcedonian community usually enjoyed the support of the Byzantine emperor until the rise of Islam, after which it felt as if grace had been taken from it with the Arab conquests.⁵⁷ The other two communities, on the other hand, had a much more complex and problematic interaction with Byzantine rule, and therefore considered the Arab rulers in a different, more positive light, referring to the Byzantine defeat first and foremost as a sign of divine punishment, due to the Byzantines' low morals and lack of piety.⁵⁸ These religio-political nuances must be taken into consideration when the image of the Jews is discussed.

Furthermore, the Jews now were not the only Other against whom the Eastern Christians could construct their own identity. They still served as a means for demonstrating the truth of the Christian faith by converting to Christianity,⁵⁹ as well as the antitype against which the Christian community (in its entirety or by denomination only) was defined.⁶⁰ As in the Greek case, religious rivals were associated with

⁵⁶ For an overview of the history of these churches under Islam see G. Troupeau, "Églises et chrétiens dans l'Orient musulman," in *Évêques, moines et empereurs (642–1054)*, eds., G. Dagron et al. (Paris, 1993), 375–456. The terms 'Jacobite' and 'Nestorian' are used here for the sake of convenience only.

⁵⁷ This is not to suggest that relations with Constantinople were always smooth, or that the Melkites could not evaluate the new rulers as a positive factor. See S. Griffith, "Melkites, Jacobites and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in Third/Ninth-Century Syria," in *Syrian Christians under Islam: the First Thousand Years*, ed., D. Thomas (Leiden, 2001), 9–55.

⁵⁸ J. van Ginkel, "The Perception and Presentation of the Arab Conquest in Syriac Historiography: How did the Changing Social Position of the Syrian Orthodox Community Influence the Account of Their Historiographers?" in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, eds., E. Grypeou et al. (Leiden, 2006), 171–84; G. Reinink, "East Syrian Historiography in Response to the Rise of Islam: The Case of John bar Penkaye's *Ktābā d-rēsh mellē*," in *Redefining Christian Identity*, ed., J. van Ginkel (Leuven, 2005), 77–89; S. Brock, "Syriac Views of Emergent Islam," in *Studies of the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed., G. Juynboll (Carbondale, 1982), 9–21.

⁵⁹ See e.g. Sharf, *Jews*, 117 n. 54.

⁶⁰ The Jews are still described as the enemies of the Christians. See e.g. Fiey, op. cit., 944–5 for the depiction of the Jews as collaborators with the Persian invasion, exactly

the Jews.⁶¹ The Jews also served as a “strengthening Other,” i.e. as a means for criticizing Christian deviators by stating that even the Jews found clear faults in their ideas and behavior.⁶² But they also served as a “fellow” minority for emphasizing, for example, the overall hostility of the Muslim rulers towards all minorities under their aegis.⁶³ In Christian Syriac and Arabic chronicles, Jews are depicted at times as part of a whole range of non-Muslim religious others—indeed as part of the People of the Book under Islamic rule.⁶⁴ In other words, they become less dominant. They are not necessarily the focus of religious otherness anymore, but a part of a sophisticated interplay of identities. This characteristic is also true for the reports on Jews in Byzantium, as we shall demonstrate in the case study below.

as they are characterized in Byzantine sources as well; Michael, *Makhtebhānūth*, III, 431–2, for a depiction of the Jews as inciting the Arab governor to destroy all the Christian crosses; the governor eventually regrets and the Jews are punished; Bar Hebraeus, *Makhtebhānūth*, 573ff./Budge 488ff., about a treacherous and greedy Jewish official. The story denotes reservation from the Jewish community as a whole, and cf. Michael, *Makhtebhānūth*, III 60.

⁶¹ E.g. Michael, *Makhtebhānūth*, II, 526–7, where a Muslim tyrant is qualified as a Jew.

⁶² See e.g. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, eds., Jean Baptiste Abbeloos and Thomas J. Lamy (Louvain, 1877), III, 174, who states that “the Greek hate us more than the Jews”; Michael, *Makhtebhānūth*, II, 91: in order to exemplify the absurd of the decisions of the council of Chalcedon, Michael reports that “even the Jews ridicule the decisions” of the council. The same procedure holds true for Byzantium.

⁶³ Such descriptions are already found when referring to the Persian occupation, and see Fiey, *op. cit.*, 945–6. For the Islamic era see: Bar Hebraeus, *Makhtebhānūth*, 139/Budge 127–8, for a Muslim decree about the temples of all Christian denominations in a certain district, as well as those of the Jews and the local Heathens; Bar Hebraeus, *Makhtebhānūth*, 143/Budge 131, who tells about “the sons of Abdalos” who expelled the Christians and the Jews of Alexandria from their houses, probably in 827 C.E.; Bar Hebraeus, *Makhtebhānūth*, 155/Budge 141, regarding the caliph al-Mutawakkil’s discrimination against the Christians and the Jews—the Jews are said to “have suffered even more” than the Christians; Bar Hebraeus, *Makhtebhānūth*, 558f./Budge 475f., for a report about plunder and pogroms of Arabs, Turkmans, and Kurds against Christians, Jews, and Muslims as well.

⁶⁴ See e.g. Agapius 8.3, 457, where “the Christians and Jews are mentioned among members of other religious communities who agree to submit themselves to the authority of Muhammad, and receive his protection (*amān*) in exchange for paying the poll tax.”

III. A CASE STUDY: THE FORCED CONVERSION OF THE JEWS BY EMPEROR LEO III

As explained in the previous section, Christian medieval historiographers provide us with ideologically biased reports, incorporating the facts into their worldview. However, a comparative reading of several reports, produced by historiographers of different ideological backgrounds, may enable us to transcend the preconditions of their literary and ideological tradition. In order to see how the understanding of the sources' background is useful in exploring the history of Byzantine Jewry, we shall focus on one major incident, namely the forcible baptism and conversion to Christianity in 721–722 by Emperor Leo III (r. 717–741), the same emperor who instigated the Iconoclastic controversy a few years later.⁶⁵

The account is reported in seven different historiographical sources—two Greek and five Eastern Christian ones. I shall first refer to the way the sources have been analyzed in modern research, and will then attempt to show that taking into account the ideological and literary background of the Eastern sources may indeed improve our conclusions as to the nature of the event.

The most detailed studies of Leo's act are those of Joshua Starr and of Andrew Sharf.⁶⁶ Both scholars focus on the information contained in the two Greek sources. They use the Eastern Christian sources to a limited extent only, and solely as supporting evidence of their conclusions based on the Greek material.

The first Greek Byzantine source is Theophanes Confessor, the historiographer who is considered as the editor of the chronography which bears his name.⁶⁷ His chronography, which ends in 814 C.E., reports regarding the events of the year 721–722 as follows: "In this year the emperor forced the Jews and the Montanists to accept baptism. The Jews, for their part, were baptized against their will and

⁶⁵ The act by Leo III was one of four alleged cases of forced baptism of the Jews in the history of Byzantium (the other three being the actions initiated by Heraclius, Basilios I, and Romanos Lecapenos. These incidents were discussed in detail in Starr, *Jews*, 1–10 and Sharf, *Jews*, 56–66.

⁶⁶ Starr, *Jews*, 2–3; Sharf, *Jews*, 109–18.

⁶⁷ On the true nature and extent of his involvement in producing the chronography, see "Introduction," in *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, trans. C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford, 1997), xliiiff.

then washed off their baptism; they partook of the Holy Communion on a full stomach and so defiled the faith. As for the Montanists, they made divination among themselves and after determining a certain day, entered the homes appointed for their false worship and burned themselves.”⁶⁸ Another historiographer, Leo Grammaticus (who lived in the tenth century), reports that Leo III “forcibly baptized the Jews and they were henceforth called Montanists.”⁶⁹

In his analysis, Starr relies first and foremost on the report by Theophanes and reads it literally: Jews and Montanists, who were ideologically identical with the followers of Montanus from the second century onwards, were compelled to convert to Orthodox Christianity during the 720s. Starr also claims that Emperor Leo withdrew his decision regarding the Jews not long after he had issued the decree, since in his *Ecloga*, published in 726, there is a threat of capital punishment on the Montanists (and Manicheans), but not on the Jews.⁷⁰ According to him, Leo III initiated an anti-Jewish action, albeit carried it through in an inconsistent manner. He understands the identification of the Jews as Montanists in Leo Grammaticus as no more than the result of confusion. He uses the non-Byzantine sources in order to add some information to the Byzantine reports, is content with describing the pieces of information, and refrains from thoroughly analyzing the non-Byzantine information, which he clearly considers as marginal.

In 1966, Andrew Sharf published an article in which he confronted Starr’s conclusions.⁷¹ Sharf argues that the identity of the “Montanists,” mentioned in the Byzantine sources together with the Jews as the focus of the forcible conversion, cannot be understood literally, since in the eighth century one could no longer find any followers of Montanus. Furthermore, Theophanes seems to have reproduced the passage from

⁶⁸ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 401 [= Mango/Scott, 554–5].

⁶⁹ Leo Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed., Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1842), 179. The English translation is quoted from Starr, *Jews*, 92. On the identity of the work’s author see “Symeon Logothetes,” in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, eds., A. Kazhdan et al. (New York, 1991), s.v.

⁷⁰ *Ecloga*, chapter 18, para. 52, in *Jus Graecoromanum (ex editione C. E. Zachariä a Lingenthal)*, eds., Ioanner and P. Zépos (Athens, 1931), II, 61. The English translation is given in E. Freshfield, *A Manual of Roman Law: The Ecloga* (Cambridge, 1926), 113.

⁷¹ A. Sharf, “The Jews, the Montanists, and the Emperor Leo III,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 79 (1966): 37–46; reprinted in his *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium* (Ramat Gan, 1995), 109–18.

a sixth-century work by Procopius of Caesarea.⁷² By relying on the identification of the Montanists as Jews in the work of Leo Grammaticus, Sharf concludes that the term “Montanists” must have been a nickname for a Jewish-Christian group that appeared around 720 and included the followers of a certain Severus who originated in Syria.⁷³ Sharf argues that the tumult caused by the followers of Severus pushed Leo III to reinforce religious control over all the Jews in his empire. According to Sharf, therefore both of the groups mentioned in Theophanes’s chronography were Jewish, one way or another. Thus, Sharf tends to accord the Jews a central role in the eyes of imperial authorities: Leo III’s aim was to end the “anomaly” of Jewish existence,⁷⁴ according to Sharf; the religious agitation caused by Severus was interpreted by the emperor in terms of a potential political danger.⁷⁵ In Sharf’s view, Leo III seems to have fostered a consistent policy: the followers of the so-called Montanist sect constituted the reason and main goal of the forcible conversion, and were equally the object of capital punishment in the *Ecloga* of 726. Sharf uses the non-Byzantine sources to the extent that they support his conclusion or weaken Starr’s arguments. Nevertheless, both scholars share the view of the centrality of the Jews in the events of 721–722, together with the superior importance of the Greek-Byzantine sources, compared to other sources. We shall now analyze the non-Byzantine sources and their literary context, in order to evaluate their potential contribution to our understanding of the forced conversion.

The forcible baptism by Leo III is mentioned in five Eastern-Christian works of historiography, produced between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries in both Syriac and Arabic. Two of them are particularly detailed, and are at the core of the following discussion: the report by Agapius (or Mahbūb b. Qunstantīn), Melkite bishop of Manbij (formerly Mabbug), in his *Universal History* (*kitāb al-‘unwān*), and the report by Michael the Syrian, Monophysite bishop of Antioch, in

⁷² Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 66.

⁷³ Sharf, *Jews*, 109ff. following a proposal made by Beneshevich. Cf. Dagron, “Judaïser,” 366 n. 40, who thinks that Sharf is incorrect in his identification of the Montanists as a Judeo-Christian sect.

⁷⁴ Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 61.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 62f.

his compendious chronicle.⁷⁶ Agapius wrote in the tenth century the following: “In that year Leo, the Emperor of Byzantium, undertook to convert to Christianity the dissenting sects of his empire, and the non-Christians. He began by Christianizing the Jewish people and the ḤR’S (sic!), and the converts were called ‘New Christians’.”⁷⁷ Two features in Agapius’s report are in clear variance with the Greek sources: first, according to Agapius, not only the Jews, but all dissident groups in Byzantine territory were subject to forcible conversion.⁷⁸ Second, the newly converted people received the status of “new Christians,” i.e. a new religious status as a result of a religious act.

Another report is provided by Michael: “At this time Leo instituted a persecution of all those resident in his realm who were alien to his faith. Many thereupon fled to Arab territory... Some of the Jews accepted baptism and became Christians; they were called *neoi politai*, which is to say ‘New Citizens’.”⁷⁹ Michael’s report presents both similarities and dissimilarities when compared with the one written by Agapius. On the one hand, like Agapius, Michael implies that the Jews were only one out of several groups who suffered forcible baptism. On the other hand, Michael differs from Agapius in describing the outcome of Leo’s act: while the motivation for the persecutions seems to be religious—the wish to eradicate all forms of heterodox or anti-Christian forms of religion—its consequences are formulated in political terms, i.e. with a new status of citizenship accorded to the converts. Both Michael and Agapius probably used the same source, an unknown early Greek one, and it is difficult to track and explain the terminological difference between them.⁸⁰ For our concern, the exact meaning behind the different terms is less important than the *mélange*

⁷⁶ The other three sources are all by Jacobite authors, and provide partial versions of the information contained in the works by Agapius and Michael: in the eleventh century, Elias bar Shinaya, *Opus chronologicum*, ed. E. Brooks (Paris, 1910), 162; in the thirteenth century, Bar Hebraeus, *Makhtebhānūth*, 118/Budge 109, and J.-B. Chabot (ed.), *Anonymi auctoris chronicon ad A.C. 1234 pertinens* (Paris, 1920), I, 308.

⁷⁷ Agapius, *Kitāb al-‘unwān*, vol. 8.3, 504. The English translation is taken from Starr, *Jews*, 91.

⁷⁸ Cf. Agapius, *kitāb al-‘unwān*, vol. 8.3, 458, regarding Khosro’s persecutions.

⁷⁹ Michael, *Makhtebhānūth*, IV, 457. The English translation is taken from Starr, *Jews*, 92.

⁸⁰ Michael relied on sources from the seventh and eighth centuries. He probably did not read Greek, but relied on translations of Greek sources, as is clear from his transliteration of the Greek term, without adding a Syriac translation. As for Agapius, as a Chalcedonian bishop it is reasonable to assume that he had access to Greek Byzantine sources.

of political and religious ideology that the two sources provide. Furthermore, they both refer to the forced baptism of the Jews as part of a wider campaign against religious rivals.⁸¹ These two features differ substantially from the parallel features found in the Greek sources.

There are two other differences between the reports by Agapius and Michael, ones that can be explained by their different religious affiliations and worldviews. When describing the persecuted groups, Michael simply states that Emperor Leo III persecuted all those “who were alien to his faith.” He refrains from any judgment of either side of the events, and provides an allegedly objective report.⁸² Agapius, quite interestingly, uses Islamic terminology in order to define the non-Orthodox rivals of the Byzantine emperor. He does not use the term “heresy,” but the word *bid'a*, literally “an innovation.” This was the most common term for defining religious deviations in Medieval Islam.⁸³ The use of the term by Agapius demonstrates religious judgment from the point of view of the Byzantine ruler, the instigator of the persecutions. As a person who sees himself as the defender of Orthodox Christianity, the emperor would obviously consider all religious opponents within Byzantine territory as heretics, and this is exactly what Agapius formulates, albeit in Islamic jargon. That Agapius would describe the events from the point of view of Chalcedonian Christianity is not surprising at all: Agapius was a Melkite bishop, that is, a Chalcedonian clergyman who lived under Islamic rule. It is only natural that he would describe the Byzantine emperor’s religious opponents unfavorably. Unlike Agapius, Michael was a Monophysite clergyman who naturally viewed the Byzantine emperor as a rival of Orthodox Christianity (i.e. his own Monophysite Orthodoxy). This may explain why he terms the groups persecuted by the Byzantine emperor more objectively.

Michael also states that some of the persecuted populations fled into Islamic territories, a statement found neither in Agapius nor in

⁸¹ Michael refers in a general way to all non-Chalcedonians, while Agapius probably referred particularly to another group beside the Jews, whose name is illegible in the manuscript.

⁸² Accordingly, Leo III’s religious affiliation is termed by Michael as “belief.” He thus abstains from defining it in either a favorable or unfavorable light.

⁸³ On the meaning of the term *bid'a* see J. Robson, “*bid'a*,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, I, 1199; B. Lewis, “Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam,” *Studia Islamica* 1–2 (1953): 43–63.

the Byzantine sources.⁸⁴ We must assume that he found information about this flight in another source, in addition to the one common to both him and Agapius. Nevertheless, one should be aware of another possible reason for his mention of the flight from Byzantium; Michael lived under Islamic rule, where the Monophysites enjoyed relatively greater freedom of action than under Byzantine rule. It may well be that he chose to emphasize the flight from Byzantine territory due to his perception of Monophysite life under Chalcedonian dominance versus life under Islam.

We have thus far indicated four elements by which the non-Byzantine reports differ from the Byzantine ones. Two of them—the question of terminology and the report about the flight from Byzantine territory—are each unique to one source only, and we have interpreted them as possible additions to the basic report by each author in accordance with his ideological background. We thus remain with the two elements that are common to both Michael and Agapius: the description of wide persecutions that go far beyond the Jewish community, and the ambiguity as to whether the consequences of the persecutions are to be described in religious or in political terms. If Michael and Agapius relied on a common early Greek source, this source provides us with a much different report when compared with the reports by Theophanes and Leo Grammaticus, who emphasize the centrality of the Jews as the focus of the forcible baptism, and the purely religious outcome of the persecutions. In order to try and decide which source best describes the events under Leo III, we must examine the Greek and Eastern Christian reports against the various possible types of discourse pertinent to each one of them.

The perspective expressed in the Byzantine sources coincides with the religious views of the Jews prevalent in the ecclesiastical milieu, as we have seen above. The reports of Theophanes and Leo Grammaticus concentrate on the Jews as the major target against which the ruler should exercise his spiritual authority. The two sources also evoke the difficulties in ascertaining the authenticity of the new Christian converts, as well as the difficulty in drawing social and religious bound-

⁸⁴ Cf. the mentioning of a similar flight of Jews from Byzantine territory due to forced conversion at the time of Romanos in al-Mas'udi, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawāhir* (*Les prairies d'or*), ed. and trans. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille (Paris, 1861), II, 17. 8f.; English tr. in Starr, *Jews*, 151 (document 91). The flight is not mentioned in parallel Jewish or Latin sources (Starr, *Jews*, 151–52).

aries between true Christians and crypto-Jews, or even between Jews and other Christian heretics. These are all marks of the widespread anti-Jewish discourse in various Byzantine literary genres. They do not reflect any *real politique* or an imperial point of view.⁸⁵

The non-Byzantine sources provide us with a different type of discourse. On their own, their report of the persecution of a whole range of religious minorities can indeed be understood as influenced by the reality under Islam, where, besides for the ruling Muslim denomination, there existed a plethora of Islamic sects, as well as various groups of non-Muslims. In such a reality, a concrete reference to any one given group—in our case, the Jews—could well be lost in a sea of religious deviations. However, the very possibility of widespread persecutions against all kinds of religious deviancy is not at all typical to life under Islamic rule.⁸⁶ The idea of religious uniformity is not prevalent in the medieval Islamic world. Nor is the preoccupation with religious versus political terminology as an outcome of conversion typical of Muslim law.⁸⁷ When taken together, all these features—a widespread persecution of all kinds of religious deviancy, with possible civil, as well as religious, consequences of conversion—do not coincide with reasonable types of discourse in Islamic context; they seem to echo far closer the Byzantine imperial policy of Caesaropapism, as we shall demonstrate below.

Forcible baptism, in Leo III's case, as well as in other cases in Byzantine history, seems to be a demonstration of political authority. It concurs with the concept of political theology, explored by John Haldon in his study of seventh-century Byzantium.⁸⁸ According to him, the term "political theology" denotes the usage of religious principles, motivations, and decision-making in the political sphere, in order to improve and strengthen the control of the state as well as that of the ecclesiastical establishment in Constantinople over the empire and the

⁸⁵ Cf. e.g. the fact that Theophanes mentioned the forced baptism of the Jews by Heraclius, but did not mention any official edict by Heraclius that must have been issued for that purpose.

⁸⁶ The exception is best marked by the religious policy of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim bi-'amr Allah. See M. Canard, "al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, III, 76–82.

⁸⁷ For the legal and religious nature of life in the world of Islam, see P. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh, 2004).

⁸⁸ Haldon, *op. cit.* n. 44.

Byzantine population and its patterns of belief.⁸⁹ Within the framework of this centralistic political theology, aimed at creating Orthodox unification, the Jews were gradually assimilated into the fabric of various groups that constituted a potential threat to the regime, or were thought to be heretical.⁹⁰

The first and foremost expression of political theology can be found in Byzantine law: The initial late antique differentiation between Jews, other non-Christians, and Christian heretics was gradually blurred. As Amnon Linder has shown,⁹¹ Jews enjoyed favorable status before the sixth century. From the sixth century onwards, Jews were grouped with pagans and heretics as far as legal judgments were concerned.⁹² Heretics, pagans, Jews, and Samaritans together were prohibited from the army and civil office.⁹³ The difference between a heretic and a Jew was blurred even nominally, a fact against which the law warns already in the sixth century.⁹⁴ Since the sixth century, the number of legal texts referring to all groups as one and the same grew considerably.⁹⁵ In penitential books the Jews did not constitute a separate category, but were included within the general group of "heretics."⁹⁶ In other cases the Jews were included under the collective title of "non-orthodox."⁹⁷

⁸⁹ Haldon, *op. cit.*, 334. Peter Brown (*op. cit.* n. 3) indicates a similar identity of interests between the state and the clergy during the Iconoclastic period.

⁹⁰ The Jews were gradually accorded a similar social and legal status as that of Christian heretics, and see Haldon, *op. cit.*, 347, and Amnon Linder's contribution to the present volume.

⁹¹ See A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, 1987) [henceforth: Linder, *Legislation*], as well as his article in the present volume.

⁹² See A. Linder, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit, 1997) [henceforth: Linder, *Early Middle Ages*], 28, 78 for several examples for the new attitude towards the Jews in Justinian's code. The prohibition to read the Bible in Hebrew is also an attempt to integrate the Jews into the fabric of the local majority (see *ibid.*, 32).

See additional examples *ibid.*, 34 (§ 22 and 23), 37 (§ 33 and 34), 38 (§ 36 and 38), 39 (§ 40), 40 (§ 42), 41–42 (§ 45 and 46), 43 (§ 47).

⁹³ See Starr, *Jews*, 138f. (document 75) for laws concerning the Jews in the Basilika. In sixth-century legislation, the most frequently mentioned religious groups, lumped together with the Jews, are the Samaritans and Montanists, other groups being referred to as "other heretics." See also Haldon, *op. cit.*, 345.

⁹⁴ See Linder, *Early Middle Ages*, 50–51 (§ 74), for such a warning in the *Collectio Tripartita*.

⁹⁵ See Linder, *Legislation*, 79.

⁹⁶ M. Arranz, *I penitenziali bizantini. Il Protokanonarion o Kanonarion Primitivo di Giovanni Monaco e Diacono e il Deuterokanonarion o "Secondo Kanonarion" di Basilio Monaco* (Rome, 1993) [Kanonika, 3] 168, § 22.

⁹⁷ D. Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance: une communauté marginalisée," in *Marginality in Byzantium*, ed., C. Maltezou (Athens, 1993), 132 and 137. Jacoby refers to the tenth century onwards.

Furthermore, in the seventh century, the emperors demonstrated a growing involvement in theological controversies, as part of their efforts to achieve imperial unity. The imperial efforts during the 640s to find a middle ground for the Monothelite controversy may well have been an attempt to win over the trust of the inhabitants of the eastern provinces, while hoping to reconquer those provinces from the Arabs one day. But, more than that, the efforts were a result of the acknowledgement of the danger to the authorities that lay in the very existence of such a controversy.⁹⁸ Later on, the council in Trullo was convened in the years 691–692 at the request of Emperor Justinian II. It was officially an imperial attempt to “burn any trace of pagan and Jewish perversity”;⁹⁹ practically, though, the motivation of the council in Trullo was the concern that some customs were practiced by people who were “un-warranted” by the official ecclesiastical hierarchy. Thus, preoccupation with heresy and with inner orthodox religious uniformity collided.

The concept of political theology seems useful for understanding Leo III’s policy in the eighth century as well. Leo’s reign is characterized by internal revolts and external attacks. He reacted to this challenge in various ways. One can understand Leo III’s iconoclastic initiative not as a strictly religious phenomenon, but as an attempt by the established regime to stop non-approved use of authority by people outside the ecclesiastical establishment.¹⁰⁰ The *Ecloga* published in 726 is another attempt to enforce unity and control upon the Byzantines. It includes threats against Christian heretics, such as the Montanists, but does not include anything specific against the Jews, though they are often included under general titles of heretics.¹⁰¹ Haldon has convincingly argued that the term “Montanists” in the eighth century is no more than an anachronistic term, used when referring to the contemporary Paulicians and Athinganoi.¹⁰² Thus, the term “Montanists”

⁹⁸ Haldon, *op. cit.*, 338.

⁹⁹ F. Trombley, “The Council in Trullo (691–692): A Study of the Canons Related to Paganism, Heresy, and the Invasions,” *Comitatus* 9 (1978): 3, 7, 9, 10.

¹⁰⁰ See the words of Brown, *op. cit.*, 292: “It amounted to strengthening the backbone of the Byzantine Church at the expense of pockets of centrifugal and illegitimate spiritual power. [...] The symbols to which Iconoclasts appealed as the true repository of the holy carried implications that summed up a system of strong centralized government.”

¹⁰¹ Freshfield, *op. cit.* n. 71, 129–33.

¹⁰² Haldon, *op. cit.*, 341 argues that the original Montanist movement lost its power already in the seventh century, and that the mention of the Montanists in Leo’s *Ecloga*

may well have functioned as a more or less collective nick-name to heretics of various sorts. If this is true, then the forcible baptism as reported by Theophanes was aimed against all possible religious deviators, Christians as well as Jews. Understood in this vein, the report by Theophanes seems much closer to non-Byzantine reports.

Later cases of persecution against the Jews seem to obey the same context of wide and variegated actions against all groups of Christian heretics. Basil I, another emperor reported to have forcibly converted the Jews,¹⁰³ acted in the same way in 873–874, by converting Paulician heretics, as well as pagans in the Peloponnese.¹⁰⁴ Romanos persecuted not only the Jews during the tenth century but also Armenians¹⁰⁵ and Muslim captives.¹⁰⁶ Romanos also operated against the Athinganoi and the Paulicians.¹⁰⁷ The broad perspective of the persecutions by the state does not mean that no particular attention was given by Basil or Romanos to the conversion of the Jews. Yet it puts the attempt to convert the Jews in a larger context of religio-political activism. The story of the forced conversions is a story of the growing identification of the state with the Orthodox Church. It is much less a story of Jewish persecution *per se*.

The fact that the acts against the Jews were part of an imperial policy is corroborated by the reservations from the acts manifested by clergymen. Gilbert Dagron has shown how reluctant the Church was to accept forcible conversion initiatives.¹⁰⁸ The clergy expressed serious doubts regarding the truthfulness of the conversion, even in cases of individuals. Maximus Confessor wrote against Heraclius's forced baptisms in the seventh century.¹⁰⁹ In the ninth century, Gregory Asbestos attacked Basil's acts of forced conversion. Byzantine abjuration formulas designed for the conversion of Jews express exactly this fear of

is but a residue of Justinian's legal codex of the sixth century, as Sharf had argued, and see *supra* n. 73.

¹⁰³ Starr, *Jews*, 3–4.

¹⁰⁴ Trombley, *op. cit.*, 4–5.

¹⁰⁵ S. Runciman, *The Emperor Romanos Lecapenus* (Cambridge, 1920), 115.

¹⁰⁶ J. Marquart, *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge: ethnologische und historisch-topographische Studien zur Geschichte des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts (ca. 840–940)* (Laipzig, 1903), 62.

¹⁰⁷ See the introduction to an anti-Monophysite tract by Demetrios, metropolitan of Cyzicus, in Gerhard Ficker, *Erlasse des Patriarchen von Konstantinopel Alexios Studites* (Kiel, 1911).

¹⁰⁸ Dagron, "Judäiser," 360ff.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 362.

outward conversion only.¹¹⁰ Such reactions once again show that the forced conversions must have been motivated primarily by imperial concerns, rather than ecclesiastical ones.

Explaining religious coercion as part of Byzantine imperial policy is not new in itself. David Jacoby has already referred to the forced conversion as an instrument of religious and socio-political unification.¹¹¹ Demonstrating the machinery of the Byzantine "state" is of less importance to us here than the historians' reaction to this machinery, or rather, their perception of this machinery. While later Byzantine historians tend to emphasize the Jewish element, the non-Byzantine sources, on the other hand, seem to better reflect the nature of the persecutions by Leo III. They preserve better the discourse of empire, a discourse that may have been clearer also in the early Greek sources the Eastern authors used, as against the discourse of the Church encapsulated in the Byzantine chronicles, at least from the eighth century onwards.

IV. CONCLUSION

One major aim of the present study is to lay some methodological foundations for analyzing the Eastern Christian and Islamic evidence of Byzantine Jewry. Exploring this evidence must be carried out only after the literary and conceptual framework of the sources is clear. The first goal of the present study is, therefore, the exploration of literary images and representations of two distinct types—Muslim and Eastern Christian, as presented above in section II.

Yet, our survey does not remain in the realm of Jewish Byzantine images. It also seeks to use the newly gained literary and ideological sensitivities for the sake of source evaluation and to learn more about Jewish Byzantine history. Achieving the latter goal is difficult enough, due to the near impossibility of isolating historical information from the literary and conceptual constructions in which it is embedded. It may be possible, however, if enough sources relate to the same historical anecdote, and if one can clearly define the prevalent models

¹¹⁰ Starr, *Jews*, 136–138 (document 74). A similar concern was expressed by the clergy also in Vizigothic Spain, and see J. Cohen, ed., *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought* (Wiesbaden, 1997).

¹¹¹ Jacoby, *op. cit.*

which each source should theoretically obey. In this manner, one can also detect the deviations from these models, and is able to evaluate their nature. Such a procedure has been attempted in section III above, and it constitutes the concrete contribution of the present essay to the study of Jewish Byzantine history.

Vera von Falkenhausen

This article is not concerned with Jews in the Byzantine Empire in general or their standing in Byzantine society. Jewish sources, such as the texts of the Cairo Genizah, provide better and more reliable information on these topics. Indeed, I am only concerned with the portrayal of Jews in Byzantine literature, a picture which has been characterized by clichés over the centuries. It is well known that research on Byzantine history is largely done without documentary evidence, since, with rare exceptions, such as Mount Athos, Patmos, or southern Italy, Byzantine archives have not survived. As a result and in contrast with Medievalists working on the history of Western Europe, Byzantinists are far more dependent on the analysis of texts which are literary in the broadest sense of the word. Thus in my Proustian search I should like to see if it is possible to find out more, beyond the clichés, about the life of Byzantine Jews and if so, in which texts and contexts. I would therefore ask you to accompany me on a somewhat winding path through the literary genres and religious topoi of Byzantium. Normative sources, including the *Codices* of civil and canon law, are deliberately excluded because they form a separate subject, which has already been very competently and thoroughly explored by scholars such as Amnon Linder and Spyros Troianos. Finally, I should like to add that this article will focus primarily on the period between the end of the sixth and beginning of the thirteenth century, since the Fourth Crusade and its consequences changed the demographic and social structures of Byzantine society to such an extent that 1204 seems to me a reasonable stopping point.

In his *Apologie pour l'histoire*, Marc Bloch distinguishes between *témoignages volontaires* and *involontaires* (voluntary and involuntary evidence). The former are those in which an author has consciously

* A slightly shorter version of this article appeared under the title *Auf der Suche nach den Juden in der byzantinischen Literatur* as a special publication (Sonderheft) of the German Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies (Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur Förderung Byzantinischer Studien), (Mainz, 2008) reprint in: *Europa im Nahen Osten—Der Nahe Osten in Europa*, eds., A. Neuwirth and G. Stock (Berlin, 2010), 201–20.

portrayed an historical event or situation, and in so doing has interpreted it. The latter on the other hand are the more or less coincidental by-products of another story, facts that are only mentioned in passing. The latter are rarer than the former but certainly more historically reliable and credible.¹ An example that comes to mind is the recently published recipe for the preparation of ink, which is preserved in a Greek manuscript (Ambros. C 222 inf.) generally dated to the eighties of the twelfth century. The unknown author points out that oak apples, which were amongst the most important ingredients, did not have to be imported from Alexandria or any distant land, but grew in the Ῥομανία, that is on Byzantine territory, and were acquired by the Jews, from whom one could buy them.² Thus a Byzantine quack, who is trying to explain how to make ink, provides us with a good example of Jewish participation in retail trade. We know that Jews were involved in silk and foreign trade from other sources: in his *Book of the Eparch* (spring 912), for example, Leo VI forbade the silk traders of Constantinople from selling their products to Jews or other merchants for resale outside the city.³ In a similar fashion, the emperors Basil II and Constantine VIII in their privilege for Venice of 992 forbade Venetian traders from transporting products belonging to Jewish, Amalfitan, or Apulian traders in their ships, which were subject to lower Byzantine custom duties.⁴

Looking at the indices of editions of Byzantine texts of any type, one comes across the words Ἰουδαῖοι and Ἑβραῖοι relatively often. The reason is obvious, since the Bible was the most widely read and quoted corpus of literary examples for Byzantine authors, whether secular or religious. The Old Testament in particular was held in far greater esteem in Byzantium than in the West. The Byzantine calendar was not based on the incarnation but on the creation of the world, which, after initial differences in calculation, was eventually fixed in

¹ M. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien* (Paris, 1952), [Cahiers des Annales 3], 23–31.

² C. M. Mazzucchi, "Inchiostri bizantini del XII secolo," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*, n.s. 42 (2005): 157f.

³ J. Koder, ed., *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen* (Vienna, 1991), [Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae, 33]: 100, § 6.16.

⁴ M. Pozza e G. Ravegnani, eds., *Pacta Veneta, 4. I trattati con Bizanzio, 992–1198*, (Venice, 1993), 23; F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, I, 2, bearbeitet von A. E. Müller unter verantwortlicher Mitarbeit von A. Beihammer (München, 2003), no. 781.

5508–5509 B.C. Many Byzantine world chronicles begin with Adam; the history of Israel consequently stood at the beginning of the history of the world and therefore of Byzantium itself. And whilst on the one hand, biblical figures were used again and again as models, David for the emperor, Moses for the bishop, Elijah for the monk, and Daniel for the martyr; on the other, the Bible included numerous stories, quotations, and prophecies that emphasized the disobedience of the Jewish people and God's anger towards them. In the New Testament, by contrast, it was possible to find much material for attributing malice and blindness to the Jews. Finally, the Acts of the Apostles and in particular the apocryphal Acts showed the Jews to be vicious persecutors of the apostles, their followers, and other important persons of the New Testament. This corpus of imagery then formed the basis of the epithets with which the Jews were described in the liturgical hymns of the Byzantine Church. Thus the hymns mention the illegal (παράνομος) synagogue of the Jews in Bethlehem.⁵ "With words and wonders you punished the lawless impudence (ἄνομον φρόνημα) of the Jews," according to a canon in praise of St Stephen.⁶ Another hymn lauded St Longinus for his use of theological argument to "cut the blasphemy of the Jews as if with a knife" whilst using wordplay to contrast his role as worshipper of Christ (χριστολάτρης) with the gold-worshipping Jews (χρυσολάτραι).⁷ This theme was especially prominent in the hymns to Pope Sylvester, who according to legend was said to have had lively discussions with the Jews on religion; thus, for example, "You let streams of pure doctrine pour over the Earth, so that you might drown the blasphemous voices of the Jews," "with the flashes of your wise words you illuminated the Church and extinguished the ideas of the Jews," "with the fire of your words... with the rivers of your tears... you destroyed the seeds of the Jews," and the malevolence (κακόνοια) of the latter was again specifically cited.⁸ Also the apostle James was said to have "dispelled the Jews' nonsense"⁹ and it would be possible to quote many more such examples. This was simply the verbalization of the anti-Jewish ideology, which every

⁵ *Analecta hymnica Graeca e codicibus eruta Italiae inferioris, Ioseph Schirò consilio et ductu edita*, IV. *Canones Decembris*, A. Kominis, ed. (Roma, 1976) 425.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 667.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II. *Canones Octobris*, A. Debiasi Gonzato, ed. (Roma, 1979), 197.

⁸ *Ibid.*, V. *Canones Ianuarii*, A. Proiou, ed. (Roma, 1971), 51, 53, 61, 63.

⁹ *Ibid.*, II. *Canones Octobris*, 273.

Byzantine sang or heard if not daily then on Sundays in church. Adjectives such as ἄνομος (impious) or παράνομος (lawless) were especially popular in this barrage of abuse, because they made clear the ideological chasm between the law (νόμος) of Moses and the Jews' rejection of the new divine law, but words such as κακός, κάκιστος or κακόνοια (bad, worst, malevolence) were equally widespread.

Such verbal insults, which were almost automatically associated with the word 'Jew,' could even become independent to a certain extent: In the more than four thousand verses of the vernacular epic 'Digenis Akritas,' the word Ἰουδαῖος is used only once and with reference to the artistic decoration of the palace to which the aging hero wishes to retire. The walls were decorated with mosaics depicting the most important stories from the Bible and Greek mythology: David and Goliath, Achilles and Agamemnon, Moses' miracles, the Plagues of Egypt and the Exodus of the Jews, κακίστων, ἀγνωμόνων, most evil and foolish.¹⁰ Although the Exodus in Christian theology became a topos for God's liberation of his chosen people from serfdom, the word 'Jew' immediately evoked associations of evil and foolishness for the anonymous poet. It is not surprising to find that in every corner of the Empire the *sanctiones* of Byzantine private documents often included the same formula that whoever did not adhere to the contract should be struck by the same curse as those who shouted "ἄρον, ἄρον, σταύρωσον τὸν Θεοῦ υἱόν," "crucify, crucify the son of God,"¹¹ or "as the Jews, who sold God" (τῶν θεοκαπήλων Ἰουδαίων).¹² In a like manner Jews could be caricatured in Byzantine illustrations.¹³

But how, in reality, did the Byzantines see their Jewish contemporaries? The general impression is that the ideologies passed down from the past obscured their view of the present. For example, leafing through the so-called *Suda*, the Byzantine encyclopedia, compiled

¹⁰ E. Trapp, *Digenes Akrites. Synoptische Ausgabe der ältesten Versionen* (Vienna, 1971) [Wiener byzantinistische Studien, 8], 333, verse 3903. In other manuscripts however the text says: γογγυσμοὺς ἀγνωμόνων (the complaints of the ungrateful): *Digenis Akritis. The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions*, ed. and trans. E. Jeffreys (Cambridge, 1998), [Cambridge Medieval Classics 7], Book 7, verse 96.

¹¹ H. Saradi, "Cursing in the Byzantine Notarial Acts: a Form of Warranty," *Βυζαντινά* 17 (1994): 457, 459, 475, 484, 491, 503, 509f.

¹² V. von Falkenhausen, "Die Testamente des Abtes Gregor von San Filippo di Fragalà," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983) [= *Okeanos. Essays presented to Ihor Ševčenko on his Sixtieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students*]: 193.

¹³ K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992), 43–72, 82.

towards the end of the tenth century, most of the references to Jews are to be found in the descriptions of people from the Old Testament. Under the specific lemma Ἰουδαῖος there is the entry: “The historian Damocritos says about the Jews that they worship the golden head of a donkey and that every three years they hunt down a foreigner and kill him by cutting his flesh into small pieces.”¹⁴ This story, which accuses the Jews of idolatry and human sacrifice, was already in circulation in the second century B.C., albeit attributed to different historians,¹⁵ but never gained widespread currency in Christian polemics. Under the heading Ἐβραῖος the *Suda* only explains, as in Genesis 10–11, that the name derives from Eber, the son of Sala, a descendant of Noah’s son Sem, who divided the land amongst his people and called the inhabitants Hebrews.¹⁶ Something similar can be found in Flavius Josephus (*Antiquitates*, I, 148–150). The names of Eber’s descendants are passed down in slightly different forms in the various Byzantine commentaries on the Septuagint, the result probably of different transcriptions or vocalizations of the original Hebrew text. Symeon Logothetes and Psellos, for example, refer to them as Phalek and Ragaû or Ragav.¹⁷ Interestingly, evil demons or rather heathen idols by the names of Eber,¹⁸ Phalkon,¹⁹ and Raps or Ipsar²⁰—demons which, as far as I am aware, are otherwise unknown—make appearances in Sicilian hagiography of the seventh to ninth centuries, in particular in the *Passio* of the Martyrs of Lentini, the holy brothers Alphius, Philadelphus and Cyrinus, the *Passio* of Pancratius, the Bishop of Taormina, and, finally,

¹⁴ A. Adler, ed., *Suidae Lexicon*, II, (Leipzig, 1931) (repr. Stuttgart, 1967), 641.

¹⁵ A. Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos. Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen antijüdischen Dialogliteratur und ihrem Judenbild* (Stuttgart, 1999) [Byzantinisches Archiv 18], 270f. (review by Paul Speck in *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 50 [2000] 340–6).

¹⁶ *Suidae Lexicon*, II, 190.

¹⁷ S. Wahlgren, ed., *Symeonis Magistri et Logotheti Chronicon* (Berlin, 2006) [Corpus fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 44, 1], 29–31; P. Gautier, ed., *Michaelis Pselli Theologica*, I, (Leipzig, 1989), 446, Nr. 114.

¹⁸ Leontios Presbyteros von Rom, *Das Leben des heiligen Gregorios von Agrigent*, A. Berger, ed. (Berlin, 1995) [Berliner byzantinistische Arbeiten, 60], 266: Eber and Raps.

¹⁹ A. N. Veselovskij, “Iz istorii romana I povesti, II. Epizod o Tavr i Menii v apokrificekoj jitiij sv. Pankratija,” *Sbornik otdetelenija russkago jazyka i slovenosti* 40/2 (1886): 76–9: Phalkon.

²⁰ M. V. Strazzeri, “I Giudei di S. Fratello,” in “*Ubi neque aerugo neque tinea demolitur*”. *Studi in onore di Luigi Pellegrini per i suoi settant’anni*, a cura di M. Del Fuoco (Naples, 2006), 677: Eber and Ypsar.

the *Vita* of Gregory, Bishop of Agrigento. Albrecht Berger identified Eber as the progenitor of the Hebrews.²¹ Could it be that Phalkon and Raps are derivations of the names Phalek and Ragav, whereby Ipsar is Raps read from right to left with an initial vowel? (ψ = ps is a single letter in Greek!) It should be noted here that particularly in the *Pasionēs* of Alphius and his brothers and of Pancratius, the dispute with the Jews and their conversion play a large part. Presumably the Sicilian hagiographers no longer had any knowledge of the possible Biblical origin of their heathen idols.

But back to the *Suda*. A further somewhat astonishing reference to the Jews is to be found under the lemma 'Jesus Christ, our Lord'. This recounts a conversation between Theodosius, the ἀρχηγὸς τῶν Ἰουδαίων or head of the Jewish community, and his Christian friend, the money-changer Philip, which was supposed to have taken place in the time of the Emperor Justinian. Theodosius admits at the very beginning of the story that, against his better judgment, he was unable to make the move to convert to Christianity on account of his influential social position, which had also brought him great wealth. However, he wishes to confide a well-kept Jewish secret to his good Christian friend, which is recounted in the registers of the Synhedrion of Tiberias, namely that the young Christ was co-opted into the body of priests at the temple in Jerusalem. It was customary in such cases for the parents of the elect to enter their anagraphic details into the register. Since Joseph had already died, Mary was asked and she declared that there were witnesses to the fact that she had given birth to Christ, that an angel had announced to her that God was the father and that she had remained a virgin. Midwives, who were summoned, confirmed the latter. Thereupon the following text was entered in the register: "On such and such a day Jesus, son of the living God and the Virgin Mary, was elected priest." When Philip wished to run immediately to the emperor to advise him to rescue this important record, Theodosius discourages him from doing so, since this would certainly lead to bloodshed, and the Jews would burn the document.²² This text, which probably dates from the seventh century, was translated into

²¹ Leontios Presbyteros von Rom, *Das Leben des heiligen Gregorios von Agrigent*, 398f.

²² *Suidae Lexicon*, II, 620–5; G. Dagron, "Jésus prêtre du Judaïsme: le demi-succès d'une légende," in *ΛΕΙΜΩΝ. Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, J. Rosenquist, ed. (Uppsala, 1996), 11–24.

Georgian, Arabic, Latin, and Church Slavonic,²³ and enjoyed, as the great number of medieval copies prove, an extraordinary popularity.²⁴ Even if the informative aims of the *Suda* cannot be compared with those of the editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, one has to concede that a Byzantine reader seeking to acquire knowledge from these entries would learn nothing about contemporary Jews living in the empire.

The Jewish religion had been tolerated in the empire since Roman times. Although their legal space was gradually restricted with the increasing Christianization of the Empire, especially under Theodosius and Justinian, the Jews were protected as a minority, could practice their religion and repair their synagogues though they were not permitted to build new ones. They were not, however, allowed to proselytize or to own or acquire Christian slaves. Marriage between Christians and Jews was regarded as adultery. It is easy to imagine how the Jewish population was thus subject to frequent harassment from local or Church authorities as for example the letters of Pope Gregory the Great, make very clear,²⁵ but in this regard they were not alone in the Byzantine Empire.

A central topic was their conversion, a topic, however, which the state often approached differently from the Church. If some emperors were keen to convert the Jews to Christianity in certain political situations, using pressure if necessary, the Church, or rather, many theologians, were more cautious in this respect. Many emperors thought they could govern the empire better if all their subjects shared one religion, although the pressure was even greater on heretics than Jews, and they considered it pleasing to God to bring new believers to Christianity.²⁶ Theologians from Maximus the Confessor to Gregory of Nicaea, by contrast, feared that those converted under pressure could form a fifth column in the Church. They also rejected the idea

²³ Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, 130.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 129f.; P. Andrist, "Pour un répertoire des manuscrits de polémique anti-judaïque," *Byzantion* 70 (2000): 279–81.

²⁵ S. Boesch Gajano, "Per una storia degli Ebrei in Occidente tra antichità e Medioevo. La testimonianza di Gregorio Magno," *Quaderni medievali* 8 (1979): 24–43; E. Baltrusch, "Gregor der Große und sein Verhältnis zum römischen Recht am Beispiel seiner Politik gegenüber den Juden," *Historische Zeitschrift* 259 (1994): 39–58.

²⁶ This always reflected to their credit: see, for example, G. Ficker, "Erlasse des Patriarchen von Konstantinopel Alexios Studites," in *Festschrift der Universität Kiel zur Feier des Geburtstages Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs Wilhelm II.* (Kiel, 1911), 22.

of giving the sacraments to those who were unbelievers at the bottom of their hearts on the grounds that this was ungodly (and a betrayal of Christ).²⁷ Finally, according to the apocalyptic literature, some Jews must remain until the end of time in order to be present at the Last Judgment.²⁸ The very rare imperial conversion campaigns, for instance those under Heraclius,²⁹ Leo III,³⁰ and Basil I,³¹ were amongst the few events affecting Jews mentioned in Byzantine chronicles and historiography. To my knowledge the imperial attempts to convert Jews at the end of the reign of Romanus I, recorded in Jewish and Arab sources,³² on the other hand, do not, as far as I am aware, appear at all in Byzantine sources.

How then did one convert the Jews? The first stage was to enlighten them. Dialogues between a Christian and a Jew were a favorite and popular genre of Byzantine literature, a sub-category of the general *Adversus Iudaeos*, and were, incidentally, much more common than the comparable dialogues between a Christian and a Muslim which attracted great notoriety towards the end of 2006 as a result of a much discussed pontifical lecture in Regensburg. Andreas Külzer has assembled 37 such dialogues dating from the second to fifteenth centuries, including the conversation between Theodosius and the money-changer Philip cited above.³³ One further “dialogue” could perhaps be added to Külzer’s list, namely the anacreontic poem by the *protasekretis* Christopher, which was probably written during Basil I’s conversion cam-

²⁷ G. Dagon, “Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée sur le Baptême des Juifs,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 350.

²⁸ L. Rydén, ed., trans., notes and appendices, *The Life of St. Andrew the Fool*, II. (Uppsala, 1995) [Acta Universitatis Upsalensis. Studia Byzantina Upsalensia, 4: 2], 274–6.

²⁹ C. de Boor, ed., *Theophanis Chronographica*, I, (Leipzig, 1883), 328. This example concerns a single case but other contemporary sources also document Heraclius’s policy of conversion.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 401; C. Mango and R. Scott with G. Greatrex, eds., *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History. A.D. 284–813*, (Oxford, 1997), 554f.

³¹ I. Bekker, ed., *Theophanis continuati Chronographica* (Bonn, 1838), 342f.; *Georgii Monachi Vitae imperatorum recentiorum*, *ibid.*, 842; *Symeonis Magistri et Logotheti Chronicon*, 263f.; P. Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, I, (Vienna, 1975) [Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae 12, 1], 333; *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches*, no. 478, p. 4.

³² U. Cassuto, “Una lettera ebraica del secolo X,” *Giornale della Società asiatica italiana* 29 (1918/1920): 97–110; M. Canard, *Extraits des sources arabes* (Bruxelles, 1950) [Corpus Bruxellense historiae Byzantinae 2, 2], 31.

³³ A. Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, 95–220.

paign.³⁴ These texts often had an astonishingly wide circulation. At least 52 manuscripts are known to exist of the dialogue between Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar, and Herban, the Jew, of which a critical edition has recently been published.³⁵ The majority of these treatises were produced in the south-eastern Mediterranean region (Egypt, Palestine, and Syria), which, with the possible exception of certain parts of Italy, was home to the largest and most active Jewish communities. This was also where the numerical relationship between Christians and Jews, as well as the social structure, was still relatively balanced. About half of the dialogues date from the period prior to the Arab conquest of the south-eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire. The main themes, which repeat themselves with beautiful regularity, were the Trinity (that is, the question of whether Christianity was really a monotheistic religion), the recognition of Christ as the Messiah (should the prophecies in the Old Testament be applied to him?), the Virgin Birth, and beginning in the seventh century, the veneration of images.³⁶ The selection of themes also explains why there were many more dialogues with Jews than with Muslims. In the case of the latter, the Byzantine theologians not only had to learn new subject matter, in many cases they also had to learn a new language, since the Greek translation of the Koran was not easily available in Byzantium.³⁷ Discussions with Jews, however, were based on a common basis of religious knowledge, since one traded quotations from the Old Testament and then talked in a monologue using quotations from the New Testament. Moreover, until the eleventh century more Jews than Muslims lived within the borders of the Byzantine Empire. The structure of these dialogues, which, as I have just said, often took the form of monologues, varied: sometimes the interlocutors had names, generally fictitious ones, although occasionally, as in the case of Emperor John VII Kantakuzenos,³⁸ their

³⁴ F. Ciccolella, "Basil I and the Jews: Two Poems of the Ninth Century," *Medioevo greco* (2000): 72–7.

³⁵ A. Berger, ed., with G. Fiaccadori, *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar. Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation* (Berlin, 2006) [Millenium-Studien, 7], 91–108, 450–802; Andrist, "Répertoire des manuscrits," 285.

³⁶ Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, 248–86.

³⁷ A. Argyriou, "Perception de l'Islam et traductions du Coran dans le monde byzantin grec," *Byzantion* 75 (2005): 26f., 57; A. Rigo, "Niceta Byzantios, la sua opera e il monaco Evadio," in *In partibus Clivus. Scritti in onore di Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli*, ed., G. Fiaccadori [Biblioteca europea 36] (Naples, 2006), 147–87.

³⁸ Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, 118f., 124–134, 144–146, 164–168, 193f., 205.

own; sometimes they were just a Jew and a Christian;³⁹ sometimes they had an audience and even an arbitrator;⁴⁰ sometimes the Jew or the Jews are converted to Christianity and let themselves and their families and slaves be baptized (the figures given range from 1 to 500,000)⁴¹ and assume new Christian names.⁴² This was probably done to give the texts some semblance of historical authenticity. The influence of this literature can be discerned, I think, in the still unedited seventh-century legend of the conversion of the Sicilian Jew Samuel and his family, a posthumous miracle of the Martyrs of Lentini, the holy brothers Alphius, Philadelphus, and Cyrinus, in which this method of listing the new Christian names and the numbers of those converted is used to excess.⁴³ Sometimes, however, the Jewish participant sticks to his inherited religion.⁴⁴

The aim of such literature, if it can be said to have had a practical aim, was to give the reader or user of these texts the necessary material for discussion and debate. And if the arguments failed to convince, there was still the possibility of a miracle. Miracles were included in a number of dialogues, such as in the *disputatio* between Gregentios and Herban, in which the miraculous appearance of Christ decided the dialogue in favor of the Christian and led thousands of Jews, blinded by his appearance, to seek conversion and healing.⁴⁵

Of course, miracles also play a role in hagiography. Older hagiography often favored bleeding images or crosses for this purpose. Think, for example, of the miracle of Beirut, in which a Jew pierced a cross with a lance and the cross then began to bleed, the blood flooding through the town. Many sick people were healed, Beirut's Jewish community was converted to Christianity, and the synagogue was changed into a church.⁴⁶ A similar story is told about a Jew who slashed the picture of Christ (or the Virgin Mary) at the fountain of the Hagia

³⁹ Ibid., 121, 137, 155f., 160, 171, 179, 190, 196.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 114f.

⁴¹ Ibid., 106–111, 114f., 127, 146, 157, 194.

⁴² Ibid., 121, 207, 212.

⁴³ Strazzeri, "I giudei di S. Fratello," 651–86.

⁴⁴ Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, 187, 193.

⁴⁵ *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios*, 780–96.

⁴⁶ E. von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder. Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende* [Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur. Neue Folge, Band 3] (Leipzig, 1899), 280**–283**; R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons* (London, 1985), 128; H. Gauer, *Texte zum byzantinischen Bilderstreit. Der Synodalbrief der drei Patriarchen des Ostens von 836 und seine Verwendung in sieben*

Sophia with a knife. When the picture began to bleed following his attack, he threw it into the fountain; when he was accused of murder as a result of his blood-drenched clothes, he confessed to his misdeed and converted to Christianity with all his family.⁴⁷

Sometimes a gesture was enough to trigger conversion. A young Jewish boy, on the way to the market in Synada in Asia Minor, saw a Christian trader making the sign of the cross over his open mouth while yawning. It was probably an apotropaic gesture designed to prevent demons from hopping into his mouth. The Jewish child imitated the gesture automatically out of curiosity and immediately felt Christian, without yet being fully aware of it himself. This Christian feeling increased to such an extent that the young man eventually decided to be baptized and enter a monastery on Mt Olympus in Bithynia. This story is said to have taken place in the second half of the ninth century and may be linked to the conversion measures introduced by Basil I.⁴⁸ This monk, who was converted in such unusual circumstances, was eventually venerated in his monastery as St Constantine ὁ ἐξ Ἰουδαίων (the former Jew).⁴⁹ Most conversions, however, are attributed to the miraculous healing of illnesses and afflictions.⁵⁰ The collection of miracles of the otherwise little known St Artemios, recorded between 660 and 669 in Constantinople, is also interesting in this context. Even when those miraculously healed are not Jews, two reports of St Artemios' miracles close with the refrain-like sentence: "What will you say, O nation of Jews, ... Artemios lays bare your actions and because of your actions he scorns you, he crushes you into the ground, he flogs you with invisible scourges, he wounds you severely and you

Jahrhunderten (Frankfurt am Main, 1994), 44; P. Andrist, "Un document du premier iconoclasme" *Revue des études byzantines* 57 (1999): 123–40.

⁴⁷ von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 216**–219**.

⁴⁸ S. Efthymiades, "Παρατηρήσεις στον βίο του αγίου Κωνσταντίνου του ἐξ Ἰουδαίων (BHG 370)," in Π' Πανελλήνιο Ιστορικό Συνέδριο (29–31 Μαΐου 1992), [Ελληνική Ιστορική Εταιρεία] (Thessalonica, 1993), 49–59.

⁴⁹ *Acta Sanctorum*, Nov. IV, 628–56. For the Life of St Constantine see also: T. Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos. Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit* [Millenium Studies 6] (Berlin, 2005), 68f., 168, 268.

⁵⁰ *Acta Sanctorum*, Maii II, LVIII D- LIX A; C. Gerbino, "Appunti per una edizione dell'agiografia di Lentini," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84/85 (1991/1992): 34f.; Strazzeri, "I Giudei di S. Fratello," 652–7; A.-J. Festugière, ed., *La Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn*, I (Bruxelles, 1970) [Subsidia hagiographica, 48], 128f.; V. Laurent, "Une homélie inédite de l'archevêque de Thessalonique Léon le philosophe sur l'Annonciation (25 mars 842)," in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant* II [Studi e testi 232] (Città del Vaticano, 1964), 297–302; Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos*, 202f. and many more.

do not feel it," or something similar.⁵¹ In similar unfriendly fashion, however, Buddha and Mani and heretics, such as Arius, Eunomius, Eutyches and Nestorius, are also challenged.⁵² The miracle in these cases served a different purpose. It was not about the individual, who converted out of gratitude for having been healed from his sufferings, but rather about every non-believer, who, on witnessing or experiencing the miraculous intervention of divine grace, was supposed to convert swiftly to Orthodoxy.

Other favorite tales of miracles are constructed on the paradox that derive from aspects of the divine, which are hidden to Christians, but revealed in visions to the blind Jew (blind because he has not recognized Christ). Thus a Jewish fellow prisoner of St Anastasius the Persian (early seventh century) saw angels clothed in white surround and minister to St Anastasius as he celebrated the mass and sang his psalms at night.⁵³ In his *Vita* of the Holy Fool Symeon of Emesa, written at about the same time, Leontios of Neapolis describes the vision of a strongly anti-Christian Jewish tradesman, who saw the saint talk to two angels whilst at the baths.⁵⁴ During a Slav attack on Thessalonica, the local Jews saw the town's patron saint, St Demetrios, dressed in a white chlamys, race across the sea, as if it were a street, and force the enemy to flee.⁵⁵ Also of interest, finally, in the context of salvific history, is the story of a Jew, who attends mass and then asks for the meat of the lamb that he saw in the moment of transubstantiation, a miracle which Agnellus of Ravenna includes in his *Liber Pontificalis*.⁵⁶ In some *vitae* of the middle Byzantine period, the holy monk discusses questions of faith with a Jew who is normally described as especially

⁵¹ V. S. Crisafulli and J. W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden, 1997), 170f., 200f.

⁵² *Ibid.* 172–4, 214.

⁵³ B. Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VII^e siècle*, I (Paris, 1992), 67–9, 237–9, 335.

⁵⁴ Léontios de Néapolis, *Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, ed., A.-J. Festugière (Paris, 1974) [Institut Français d'archéologie de Beyrouth. Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, 95], 88; D. Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontios's Life and the Late Antique City* (Berkeley, 1996) [The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 25], 43, 123, 158.

⁵⁵ P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius*, I (Paris, 1979), 178.

⁵⁶ *Agnelli Ravennatis Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, D. Deliyannis, ed. (Turnhout, 2006) [Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Medievalis, 199], 310, § 133.

learned (νομομαθής). The latter, however, generally has two options. Either he falls down dumb or dead or he converts.⁵⁷

The encounter between a saint and a Jew in the Life of Nilus of Rossano, a cultured Greek monk from Calabria who died at a ripe old age in 1004 in Grottaferrata near Rome, took a different path. Nilus's *Vita* was written about twenty years after his death by a learned disciple. The *Vita*, which is quite anti-Jewish in tone, relates the argument between Nilus and Donnolo, a learned and respected Jewish doctor whom he had known since his youth, who wanted to prescribe him medicine to help him through his strict ascetic regime. Nilus indignantly rejects the help with the words that God was his doctor and that Donnolo's aim was to mislead true Christians by claiming that he, Nilus, was taking a Jewish doctor's medicine. Nonetheless, Donnolo neither converts to Christianity nor falls over dumb or dead, nor is he entrusted to evil demons; instead he and Nilus meet again after some time at the sickbed of a senior Byzantine official, as doctor and spiritual guide respectively.⁵⁸ This case not only depicts the normal daily intercourse between Jews and Christians and the high professional regard in which the Jewish doctor was held, though in other hagiographic texts Jews were often portrayed as magicians and mixers of poison,⁵⁹ but also and more importantly, it tells of a Jewish doctor who was not a fictitious character but rather the well-known southern Italian doctor and astrologer, Shabbetai Donnolo, whose connections with Rossano are attested at this time,⁶⁰ though he is not otherwise

⁵⁷ I. Pomjalovskij, *Žitie iže vo svjatyh otza naschego Theodora archiepiskopa Edesskago* (Sanktpeterburg, 1892), 22, 93; B. Martin-Hisard, "La Vie de Jean et Euthyme et le statut du monastère des Ibères sur l'Athos," *Revue des études byzantines* 49 (1991): 110f.

⁵⁸ G. Giovanelli, *Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Νείλου τοῦ Νέου* (Badia di Grottaferrata, 1972), 93, 98.

⁵⁹ *La Vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune (521–592)*, Paul van den Ven, ed., I (Bruxelles, 1962) [Subsidia hagiographica, 32], 178–81; F. Nau, "Le texte grec des récits utiles à l'âme d'Anastase (le Sinaïte)," *Oriens Christianus* 3 (1903): 70. This story of Daniel, the Jewish poisoner, who confessed just as he was about to be burned on the stake that his magic potions had no effect on Christians who went to Communion daily, was so popular that it was still told in Comnenian time in the *Vita* of Saint Cyril Philéotes. *La Vie de saint Cyrille le Philéote, moine byzantin (+ 1110)*, É. Sargologos, ed. (Bruxelles, 1964) [Subsidia hagiographica, 39], 253.

⁶⁰ G. Fiaccadori, "Donnolo Shabbetai bar Abrāhām," in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 41 (Rome, 1992), 215; F. Luzzati Laganà, "La figura di Donnolo nello specchio della Vita di s. Nilo di Rossano," in *Šabbetai Donnolo: Scienza e cultura ebraica nell'Italia del secolo X*, ed., G. Lacerenza (Napoli, 2004) [Università degli studi di Napoli «L'Orientale». Dipartimento di studi asiatici. Ser. Minor 66], 69–103;

mentioned in the Greek and Latin sources of the period. We could be dealing with a piece of reality here, since the eleventh Canon of the Trullan Council, which forbade contact with Jews and especially treatment by Jewish doctors,⁶¹ was, it seems, never taken particularly seriously. The Emperor Manuel I was for instance supposed to have had a Jewish doctor.⁶² I do not know whether a working knowledge of human anatomy was normally required for those in charge of punitive blinding, but, interesting enough, the only Jew mentioned in the *Historia* of Michael Attliates (ca. 1020-after 1085) is the incompetent executioner charged with the cruel blinding of Emperor Romanus IV (1072). The historian does not fail to say that he belonged to the lineage of those who killed God (ὁ τῆς θεοκτόνου τυγχάνων σειρῶς).⁶³

The seemingly innocent question, “Why is the Jews’ faith bad and ours good?” which the disciple Gregory puts to his spiritual father Basil the Younger (tenth century), could reflect the daily relationship between Christians and Jews. After all, Gregory argued, the Jews did not believe in idols but in God, who had made Heaven and Earth; and even if their ancestors had been guilty of the murder of God (θεοκτονία), their descendants, who adhered to the old law, were innocent before God. Here, however, the naïve disciple was immediately put right by his eager mentor, who told him that the Jews were no longer God’s chosen people (λαὸς Θεοῦ) but instead cursed and destined for extermination, and that when they gathered in the synagogues on the Sabbath for the explanation of the law, it was not the Lord but the Devil who was amongst them.⁶⁴ This response is probably the reason why Gregory’s question was included in the hagiographic text, since several Byzantines may have asked themselves exactly the

Shabbetai Donnolo, *Sefer Hakhmoni. Introduzione, testo critico e traduzione italiana annotata e commentata* a cura di P. Mancuso (Firenze, 2009) [Biblioteca ebraica italiana], 8–21.

⁶¹ H. Ohme, trans. and intro., *Concilium Quinisextum. Das Konzil Quinisextum*, (Turnhout, 2006) [Fontes Christianae, 82], 196, canon 11; *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta. Editio critica*, I; G. Alberigo et al., eds., *The Oecumenical Councils from Nicaea I to Nicaea II (325–787)* (Turnhout, 2006), 237.

⁶² Benjamin da Tudela, *Libro di viaggio*, trans., L. Minervini (Palermo, 1989), 52.

⁶³ Miguel Ataliates, *Historia*, ed., I. Pérez Martín (Madrid, 2002), 131f.

⁶⁴ A. N. Veselovskij, “Θεωρία Γρηγορίου,” *Sbornik otdleniia jazika i slovesnosti imperatorskoj akademii Nauk* 53, 6 (1891), Priloženie, 4: 11f.; S. Vilinskij, “Žitie sv. Basilija Novago v ruskoj literatury,” II, *Zapiski imperatorskago novorossijskago Universiteta, istoriko-philologičeskago fakulteta* 7 (1911): 41–5.

same question about their Jewish neighbors and all had to be put right in a similar fashion. Some normal situations can also be perceived in a tract, written in Constantinople in the eleventh century, against the Phundagiagites, a Bogomil sect. According to the author, it was quite possible to meet and eat with Jews and thereby cause little damage to the soul, since even if the Jew was unclean, he believed in God and otherwise admitted to his religion. In contrast, contact with heretics, who disguised themselves as Christians but in reality served the Devil, led to certain ruin.⁶⁵ Interestingly, Jews were not listed as a separate category in Byzantine penitential books, which only forbade sexual intercourse with heretics and the unbaptized in general.⁶⁶

Conversion to Christianity could create considerable difficulties. The converted Jew lost the support of his family, if all members did not convert together, as well as that of the Jewish community, whilst Christians often regarded newly baptized members of their faith with mistrust. This is why accounts of the conversion campaign under Emperor Basil I make repeated reference to the emperor rewarding the freshly converted with gifts of money and positions.⁶⁷ Interesting in this context, for example, is a quotation from the *Typikon* of the Kosmosoteira Monastery in Thrace, which was founded by the Sebastokrator Isaac, one of the younger sons of Emperor Alexios I, in the mid-twelfth century. It reads "You must reward with special attention those who with God's help convert from other religions to ours and receive holy baptism. This has to be done so that my soul finds favor with God. I therefore resolve that Alexios and his wife Irene, who were called from the Jewish faith to us and the true faith, shall receive the following gifts for as long as they live: as I already resolved in an earlier document, Irene shall receive three *modioi* of grain a month and fifteen *trachea nomismata* and a coat a year. Her husband, Alexios, shall, if he continues to live with her, receive two *modioi* of grain and

⁶⁵ G. Ficker, *Die Phundagiagiten. Ein Beitrag zur Ketzergeschichte des byzantinischen Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1908), 4f.

⁶⁶ M. Arranz, *I penitenziali bizantini. Il Protokanonarion o Kanonarion Primitivo di Giovanni Monaco e Diacono e il Deuterocanonarion o "Secondo Kanonarion" di Basilio Monaco* (Roma, 1993) [Kanonika, 3], 168, § 22.

⁶⁷ I. Bekker, ed., *Theophanis continuati Chronographia* (Bonn, 1838), 342f.; *Georgii Monachi Vitae imperatorum recentiorum*, *ibid.*, 842; *Symeonis Magistri et Logotheti Chronicon*, 263f.; Dagron, "Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée," 319, 347f.; R. Bonfil, *History and Folklore in a Medieval Jewish Chronicle: The Family Chronicle of Ahima'az ben Paltiel* (Leiden, 2009) [Studies in Jewish History and Culture 22], 268–70.

two measures of wine a month and two *hyperpyra nomismata* a year.”⁶⁸ Alexios and Irene were the names of the imperial parents of the Sebastokrator, which the two converts presumably adopted when they were baptised. The text suggests that Isaac expected a heavenly reward for each converted Jew but that he had some doubts as to the sincerity of the conversion of the husband.

If material help was inadequate, relapses might occur. The Metropolitan of Corfu, Giorgios Bardanes, wrote a request for official assistance from his Latin colleague in Otranto in 1220 in the matter of a Jewess of Corfu who, having converted to Christianity, had returned to her original religion following her marriage to a Jew, which had been arranged by her brother, and had subsequently disappeared to Otranto with her husband for fear of punishment.⁶⁹ Such relapses were, it seems, not all that rare; to prevent them, newly baptized Jews had to utter such fearsome curses against their original religion that it was difficult for them to return to it.⁷⁰ The discussion between Bishop Gregentios and Herban the Jew, cited above, suggests another method. Here the numerous newly baptized converts and their descendants were forbidden to marry Jews. In addition, the Jewish converts to Christianity were to be settled amongst other Christians so that they forgot their roots and traditions.⁷¹ An example of an apparently successful conversion is Leon Mungos, a Jew by birth who became Archbishop of Ochrid in the second quarter of the twelfth century and was known by the title ‘Teacher of the Pagans’.⁷² On the one hand, it is very

⁶⁸ L. Petit, “Typikon du monastère de la Kosmosotira près d’Aenos (1152),” *Izvestiia Russkago Archeologicheskago Instituta v Konstantinople* 13 (1908): 65; N. P. Ševčenko, trans., “Kosmosoteira: Typikon of the Sebastokrator Isaac Komnenos for the Monastery of the Mother of God Kosmosoteira near Bera,” in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders’ typika and Testaments*, ed. J. Thomas and A. Constantinides Hero, II (Washington, D.C., 2000) [Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 35, 2], 840.

⁶⁹ J. M. Hoeck O.S.B. and R. J. Loenertz O.P., *Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto, Abt von Casole. Beiträge zur Geschichte der ost-westlichen Beziehungen unter Innozenz III. und Friedrich II.* (Ettal, 1965) [Studia Patristica et Byzantina, 11], 182–4.

⁷⁰ A. A. Dmitrievskij, *Bogoluženie v russkoj čerkvi v XVI vek* (Kazan, 1884), 61–87; F. Cumont, “Une formule grecque de renonciation au Judaïsme,” *Wiener Studien* 23 (1901): 466–9; P. Eleuteri and A. Rigo, *Eretici, dissidenti, musulmani ed ebrei a Bisanzio* (Venice, 1993), 42–50.

⁷¹ *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios*, 798.

⁷² Λέων ὁ Μουγγός, ἐξ Ἰουδαίων ὦν ἐκ προγόνων, χρηματίσας διδάσκαλος τῶν ἐθνῶν: Théophylacte d’Achrida, *Discours, traités, poésies*. Introduction, texte, traduction et notes par P. Gautier (Thessalonique, 1980) [Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae, 16, 1], 30.

revealing that a convert was considered especially suitable for service as a 'Teacher of the Pagans,' and on the other, it is interesting that even long after he had attained high office in the Church, he remained ὁ ἐξ Ἰουδαίων ὢν ἐκ προγόνων (descended from Jewish ancestors) to his colleagues who came from generations-old Christian stock. Conversions of Christians to Judaism, reported in Jewish sources,⁷³ are not mentioned at all in Byzantine literature.

References to Jews are rife in the literature relating to Iconoclasm. The more the intellectual quality of Byzantine theology deteriorated, the more important the veneration of icons became. As already mentioned, the number of edifying legends involving images taking an active part in events had been increasing since the seventh century. Examples include the icon of Christ Antiphonites, upon which an oath was sworn to seal a credit agreement between a Christian and a Jewish merchant and which actually forced the dilatory partner to stick to the terms of the agreement;⁷⁴ the Beirut crucifix and the icon of Christ in Constantinople, which bled when Jews attacked them with knives;⁷⁵ or the image of the Theotokos in Lydda, which Jewish painters sought in vain to whitewash.⁷⁶ In most cases, the miracles led to the conversion of such dramatically enlightened Jews. The image question is—*pace* Paul Speck⁷⁷—then incorporated into the Jewish-Christian dialogue literature by Leontios of Neapolis and Anastasius of Sinai,⁷⁸

⁷³ Here I am thinking of Andrew, Archbishop of Bari, for example, who is supposed to have converted to Judaism in the 1060s in Constantinople (C. Colafemmina, "La conversione al giudaismo di Andrea arcivescovo di Bari," in *Giovanni-Ovadiah da Oppido, proselito, viaggiatore e musicista dell'età normanna*. Atti del convegno internazionale di Oppido Lucano, 28–30 marzo 2004, eds., A. De Rosa e M. Perani [Firenze, 2005], 55–65). At about the same time, a Jew complained about the rabbis of Constantinople, who made it unnecessarily difficult for those who wished to convert to Judaism. (Dagron, "Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée," 371, n. 71.)

⁷⁴ B. N. Nelson and J. Starr, "The Legend of Divine Surety and the Jewish Moneylender," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire orientales et slaves* 7 (1944): 289–338. A similar miracle is attributed to St. Menas who interferes in favor of a Jewish merchant of Alexandria cheated by a Christian colleague: P. Devos, "Le Juif et le Chrétien. Un miracle de Saint Ména," *Analecta Bollandiana* 78 (1960): 275–308.

⁷⁵ See footnote 46.

⁷⁶ von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 146*; Gauer, *Texte zum byzantinischen Bilderstreit*, 34–6.

⁷⁷ P. Speck, "Adversus Iudaeos—pro imaginibus. Die Gedanken und Argumente des Leontios von Neapel und des Georgios von Zypern" in *Varia VI. Beiträge zum Thema 'Byzantinische Feindseligkeit gegen die Juden' nebst einer Untersuchung zu Anastasios dem Perser*, ed., P. Speck (Berlin, 1997) [ΠΟΙΚΙΛΙΑ BYZANTINA 15], 131–76.

⁷⁸ V. Déroche, "L'apologie contre le Juifs de Léontios de Néapolis," *Travaux et mémoires* 12 (1994): 45–104; Id., "Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'Islam

and continues to be repeated down to the twelfth century under the shop-worn rubric of whether the icons of Christ or saints were idols.⁷⁹ According to Theophanes, the Emperor Leo III persecuted the Jews because of a Messiah who had appeared in Syria at that time.⁸⁰ This is possible but it is necessary to remember that he and his followers were described as 'Judaizing' by their Iconophile contemporaries for their opposition to images, an expression that was used both in hagiography⁸¹ and in theological literature.⁸² Leo had, therefore, to openly demonstrate his enmity towards Judaism. Byzantine chronicles did, however, make a connection between him, and subsequently Michael II, and Jewish magicians, to whom they were supposed to have sold their souls.⁸³ In this period, Byzantine literature is full of devils and demons, who disguise themselves as Jewish merchants and magicians to buy the souls of good Christians or otherwise lead them into temptation.⁸⁴ After about a century and a half these themes disappear, but the equation of the terms 'Jew' and 'opposition to pictures' remained. For example, the *Vita* of St. Andrew the Fool quotes a woman, who indignantly rebukes her ungodly husband for not bowing and crossing himself before an icon with the words "You wretch, why do you stand there like a Jew!"⁸⁵

(7^e–8^e siècles), *Revue des études byzantines* 57 (1999): 141–61; Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, 149–52.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 185f., 198.

⁸⁰ *Theophanis Chronographia*, I, 401.

⁸¹ *La Vie d'Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre. Introduction, édition et traduction* par M.-F. Auzépy (Aldershot, 1997) [Birmimgham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs, 3], 138; S. A. Paschalides, 'Ο βίος τῆς ὁσιομυροβλύτιδος Θεοδώρας τῆς ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ. Διήγησις περὶ τῆς μεταθέσεως τοῦ τιμίου λειψάνου τῆς ὁσίας Θεοδώρας (Thessalonica, 1991), 94, 96.

⁸² G. Fatouros, ed., *Theodori Studitae Epistulae*, II (Berlin, 1992) [Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae, 33/2], 214, esp. 93; 258, esp. 141; 336, esp. 214; 345, esp. 221; 443, esp. 301; 456, esp. 313; 464, esp. 321; 557, esp. 402; 590, esp. 421; 663, esp. 463; 772, esp. 518; J. M. Featherstone, ed., *Nicephori patriarchi Constantinopolitani Refutatio et eversio definitionis synodalis anni 815*, (Turnhout, 1997) [Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca, 33], 6 *et passim*; Canon on the setting up of the Holy Images probably written by Methodios: Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 99, 1773, 1777.

⁸³ J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire* (Athenes, 1939) [Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie, 30], 90–9.

⁸⁴ *Symeonis Magistri et Logotheti Chronicon*, 180f.; L. Radermacher, "Griechische Quellen zur Faustsage," *Akad. Wissenschaften Wien, phil.-hist. Kl., Sitzungsberichte* 206/4 (1927): 164–218; A. Acconcia Longo, "La Vita di s. Leone vescovo di Catania e gli incantesimi del mago Eliodoro," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neellenici*, n. s. 26 (1989): 82–5; Gauer, *Texte zum byzantinischen Bilderstreit*, 90–4, 106, 114, 134–137, 142f.

⁸⁵ *The Life of Saint Andrew the Fool*, 240.

In some texts it is all a matter of the expulsion of the Jews from the towns. Thus in the description of the last days of the world in the *Vita* of Saint Andrew the Fool (tenth century), the good Roman emperor is characterized as someone who wins back Illyria for the Empire, makes Egypt pay its dues, defeats the blonde people (which were generally understood to be the Germanic people of Western Europe), and persecutes the Jews.⁸⁶ According to his *Vita*, Saint Nikon Metanoieites (late tenth century) was supposed to have expelled the Jews from Sparta to rid the city of a terrible epidemic; when a member of the local upper class (ἄρχων) recalled a particularly skilled Jewish weaver, he was roundly berated by the zealous monk, whilst the Jewish craftsman was viciously beaten.⁸⁷ Such examples are to be found not only in hagiographic literature. In an *encomium* for his former teacher Nicetas, the deceased Metropolitan of Chonai, the highly educated Metropolitan of Athens, Michael Choniates (1138–1222) writes approvingly that Nicetas loathed Jews to such an extent that he did not allow them to live on his estates or to serve the Church in the professions they liked to follow. Nicetas had, instead, driven them from their homes, so that they now lived like leather-chewing dogs as tanners and dyers at the edge of the city.⁸⁸ In this context, it is notable that even Benjamin of Tudela, who visited Constantinople in the late 1160s, observed that the Jews did not live in the city but on the other side of the Golden Horn and were scorned by the Greeks because of the foul-smelling effluents from the tanneries which flowed through their quarter, polluting it.⁸⁹

Conversion and expulsion are thus the main themes we encounter again and again in different forms in Byzantine literature. Christian Byzantines seem to have found the different dietary rules and divergent calendar of feast-days, the Sabbath and new moons, that is, the most visible signs of religious difference, the most disturbing, since the problem of circumcision was generally only encountered at a much more advanced stage of acquaintance. The collection of posthumous

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁸⁷ D. F. Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon* (Brookline, 1987), 110–2, 118–20.

⁸⁸ S. Lampros, ed., *Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τοῦ Χωνιάτου τὰ σωζόμενα*, I (Athens, 1879), 53; G. Prinzing, "Zu den Minderheiten in der Mäander-Region während der Übergangsepoche von der byzantinischen zur seldschukisch-türkischen Herrschaft (11.- Anfang 14. Jh.)," in *Ethnische und religiöse Minderheiten in Kleinasien. Von der hellenistischen Antike bis in das byzantinische Mittelalter*, eds., P. Herz and J. Kobes (Wiesbaden, 1998) [Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik, 2], 161–7.

⁸⁹ Benjamin da Tudela, *Libro di viaggio*, 52.

miracles of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, generally dated to the late sixth or early seventh century, reports the miraculous healing of a Jewish woman suffering from a painful cancer who prayed for help at their shrine in Constantinople. Three times the Saints ordered her to eat pork, without which there would be no remedy. When, after long hesitation, the Jewess finally overcame her inherited disgust for the forbidden meat, she was healed and became a Christian. Apparently this miracle was so popular that it was attributed to other medical saints, as for instance to Sts Cyrus and John.⁹⁰ "Idleness is for me like the consumption of pork for Jews," says Timarion in the eponymous early twelfth-century satire.⁹¹ The problem of the Sabbath appears as well in the dialogue literature,⁹² in hagiography,⁹³ and in canon law.⁹⁴ At the end of the tenth century, the above-mentioned monk Nikon Metanoieites, founder and abbot of a monastery near Sparta, records in his will that he freed the Peloponnese from the plague and expelled the Jews from the area, so that they should pull down their abattoirs near the monastery, slaughter on Saturdays, and observe Sunday as a feast-day.⁹⁵ A prayer to be recited by the Athinganoi who had returned to Orthodoxy includes, *inter alia*, "I damn those who consecrate the Sabbath as do the Jews,"⁹⁶ whilst Jews who converted to Christianity had to forswear *expressis verbis* the rules of fasting, the Sabbath, and the new moons.⁹⁷ In the eleventh century the problem appears regularly in discussions with the so-called Latins or Roman Catholics who fasted on Saturdays during Lent. Fasting on Saturdays and the use of unleavened bread for the practices of Eucharist were liturgical rituals which the Byzantines passionately condemned as Judaizing.⁹⁸ In

⁹⁰ L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian. Texte und Einleitung*, (Leipzig, 1907), 101–104; *Sainte Thècle, saints Côme et Damien, saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), saint Georges*, traduits et annotés par A.-J. Festugière (Paris, 1971), 87f., 100–2.

⁹¹ R. Romano, ed., Τιμαρίων ἢ περὶ τῶν κατ'αὐτὸν παθημάτων, in *La satira bizantina dei secoli XI–XV* (Torino, 1999), 112.

⁹² Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos*, 285f.

⁹³ Strazzeri, "I Giudei di S. Fratello," 652.

⁹⁴ Canon VIII of the council of Nicaea II (787) mentions the pseudo-Christians or crypto-Jews who secretly continue to observe the Saturday (λαθραίως σαββατίζοντες): *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta*, I, 328f.

⁹⁵ O. Lampsides, "Ὁ ἐκ Πόντου ὄσιος Νίκων ὁ Μετανοεῖτε," *Ἀρχεῖον Πόντου* 13 (1982): 252; *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, I, 317.

⁹⁶ Dmitrievskij, *Bogoluzhenie v russkoj čerkvi*, 50.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 62, 69f.; Eleuteri—Rigo, *Eretici, dissidenti*, 43, 48.

⁹⁸ C. Will, *Acta et scripta quae de controversiis ecclesiae graecae et latinae saeculo undecimo composita extant* (Leipzig, 1861), 56–9, 180f.; J. Darrouzès, "Le mémoire

a polemical poem by Michael Psellos about a monk from the Sabbas Monastery, that is, a Sabbaïte, who had dared to poke fun at the great philosopher's monastic calling, it is written "You should not be called Sabbaïte but Sabbatite, someone who adheres to the Sabbath and the new moons and to the old law, which is no longer valid, whilst rejecting the new Grace."⁹⁹ By playing on the word 'Sabbath,' Psellos has dismissed the bumptious monk as Judaizing without even using the word 'Jew'. Thus not only everything that was Jewish but also anything that looked Jewish or was reminiscent of Jewish customs was to be rejected and eliminated straight away.¹⁰⁰

Marcel Proust concluded his *À la recherche du temps perdu* with the volume *Le temps retrouvé*. He had found his time again. I fear that the Jews will for the most part remain lost in Byzantine literature.

de Constantin Stilbès contre les Latins," *Revue des études byzantines* 21 (1963): 67, 71, 76f., 86; T. Kolbaba, "Meletios Homologetes, 'On the Customs of the Italians,'" *Revue des études byzantines* 55 (1997): 147; A. Bayer, *Spaltung der Christenheit. Das sogenannte Morgenländische Schisma von 1054* (Köln, 2004), 65, 217; E. Büttner, *Erzbischof Leon von Ohrid (1037–1056). Leben und Werk (mit den Texten seiner bisher unedierten asketischen Schrift und seiner drei Briefe an den Papst)* (Bamberg, 2007), 180–256.

⁹⁹ Michael Psellus, *Poemata*, ed., L. Westerink (Stuttgart, 1992), 259, n. 21.

¹⁰⁰ D. Jacoby, "Les Juifs de Byzance: une communauté marginalisée," in *Oi περιθωριακοὶ στὸ Βυζάντιο* ("Ἴδρυμα Γουλανδρῆ-Χόρν), ed., C. A. Maltezou (Athens) (= in Id., *Byzantium, Latin Romania and the Mediterranean*, Aldershot, 2001), 114f.

CONVERTS IN BYZANTINE ITALY: LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS OF JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RIVALRY

Youval Rotman

I. THE ROLE OF CONVERSION IN THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

The theme of conversion has a special place in the Byzantine literature that deals with Christian-Jewish relations. This is manifested in imperial legislation, in formulae of abjuration for Jews who choose to convert to Orthodox Christianity, as well as in stories about Jewish converts. Conversion to Judaism, although much less frequent for obvious reasons, is not absent, and is mentioned in both Christian and Jewish sources.

It is clear that the Byzantine preoccupation with conversion in relation to Jews cannot be separated from Christian-Jewish polemics in general.¹ Nonetheless, Jewish-Christian relations as portrayed in stories of conversion must also be examined in the broader medieval context. Conversion as a political issue was a major concern of emperors from Late Antiquity on, in view of the existence of large non-Chalcedonian Christian communities in the Byzantine Empire.² The forced conversions that Heraclius imposed on the Jews in 630/631 are often explained as an act of internal consolidation. When Heraclius seized the Byzantine throne in 610, he soon had to confront the Persian conquests of Palestine and Egypt. Following his victory over the Sassanid Empire in 627, internal consolidation was needed both for

¹ See G. Dagron, "Judaiser," *TM* 11 (1991): 359–80; Av. Cameron, "Byzantines and Jews," *BMGS* 20 (1996): 249–74; V. Déroche, "L'apologie contre les juifs de Léontios de Néapolis," *TM* 12 (1994): 45–104.

² V. von Falkenhausen, "L'Ebraismo dell'Italia meridionale nell'età bizantina (secoli VI–XI)," in C. Fonesca, M. Luzzati, G. Tamani and C. Colafemmina, eds., *L'Ebraismo dell'Italia Meridionale Peninsulare dalle origini al 1541. Società, Economia, Cultura. IX Congresso internazionale dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio del Giudaismo* (Congedo Editore, 1996), 25–46, esp. pp. 25–8. See for example the different formulae of abjuration for heretics who convert to Chalcedonian orthodoxy in P. Eleuteri and A. Rigo, *Eretici, Dissidenti, Musulmani ed Ebrei a Bisanzio. Una raccolta eresiological del XII secolo* (Il Cardo, 1993).

political and religious reasons. Forced conversions of Jews thus appear as a part of his imperial internal policy.³

Following the Islamic conquests of the seventh century, most of the non-Chalcedonian communities, especially the Monophysites and the Nestorians, were no longer a part of the Byzantine Empire. The Islamic conquests had transformed the international map of the Mediterranean and deprived Byzantium of most of its provinces in the Near East. The Empire was left with approximately one third of its territory and probably less than a third of its population. The Jewish communities, which had been spread all over the Byzantine and Sassanid empires, were now mostly divided between Arab and Byzantine rule. Only a small part of these Jewish communities were left in Byzantium. The Byzantine Jews maintained their position as a religious minority, and by the eighth century they had become the most important religious minority in Byzantium. Moreover, they were now connected to the Jewish communities who lived in Arab lands.

Following the advent of Islam, the situation of the Christian inhabitants of the Byzantine state had also changed. Byzantium found itself on a defensive position vis-à-vis the Arab Caliphate, not only politically, but also, for the first time, religiously. Thus by the eighth century internal Christian unity had become a political necessity.⁴ As Averil Cameron has shown in her "Images of Authority: Elits and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium" (*Pe&P* 88, 1979), the Iconoclastic crisis, which was both a religious and a political one, can thus be understood as an imperial policy to create a form of religious unity focused on the image of the emperor. This religious and political unity was finally achieved in 843, when icon veneration was officially and definitively restored. It is thus not surprising that Leo III, who initiated the Iconoclastic politics, is also said to have declared in 721/722 a policy of forced conversion of Jews and Montanists alike. As with Heraclius,

³ G. Dagron, "Le traité de Grégoire de Nicée," *TM* 11: 347. This fits the triumphal return of the Cross to Jerusalem orchestrated by Heraclius as a symbol of the Christian consolidation of the Empire. G. Dagron and V. Déroche, "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VII^e siècle," *TM* 11 (1991): 17–273, pp. 25–6. See the forced conversion imposed on the Jews of Boreium in North Africa by Justinian, for which our only source is Procopius' *De aedificiis*, VI, 2, 21–23: A. Rabbelo, *Giustiniano, ebrei e samaritani: alla luce delle fonti storico-letterarie, ecclesiastiche e giuridiche*, 2 vols. (Giuffrè, 1987–1988), vol. 1, pp. 234ff.

⁴ Y. Rotman, "Byzance face à l'Islam arabe VII^e–X^e siècles," *Annales H. S. S.* 60/4 (July–August 2005): 767–88.

his policy can be understood as a call for consolidation, and it was repeated under Basil I.⁵

In his book, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), David Olster argues for a symbolic meaning for the role given to the anti-Jewish polemics in Byzantine literature, in view of the political and religious crisis that Byzantium experienced in the seventh and eighth centuries on its Arab-Muslim front. His theory, which was widely criticized, has nonetheless revealed the genuine problematics in the historical approaches used up to now for analyzing Byzantine anti-Judaic literature.⁶ This goes beyond the obvious viewpoint of looking for rhetorical and ideological meaning in the figure of the Jew as portrayed in Christian Byzantine literature. Both Olster and his critics have left one central question unanswered: did Christian-Muslim rivalry change the Byzantine Christian attitude towards the Jew? This question offers a much broader perspective for discussing the theme of the conversion of the Jew as a political means of religious consolidation.

In this paper I would like to address this question by examining the effects that Byzantine policy had in this matter at the local level. I wish to scrutinize the ways in which local Christian and Jewish communities addressed and referred to the phenomenon of conversion. Following the fundamental study of Vera von Falkenhausen, I have chosen to focus on the local religious communities of southern Italy and Sicily in this study.⁷ Byzantine Sicily and southern Italy offer an ideal case-study, thanks to their local literary production. The hagiographic literature that was written in this region is particularly important for the analysis of the local perception of the theme of conversion. Hagiographic texts are, in general, much more descriptive than others as far as everyday life, local customs, and local representations are concerned.⁸ Moreover, hagiographic texts from this area of the Empire focus on local social and cultural issues, and reveal the way they were dealt with by the local Byzantine population.

⁵ Dagron, "Le tratié," op. cit., 347; Von Falkenhausen, op. cit., 26-7.

⁶ Cameron, "Byzantines," op. cit. V. Déroche, "Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l'Islam (7^e-8^e s.)," *REB* 57 (1999): 141-62.

⁷ Von Falkenhausen, "L'Ebraismo," op. cit.

⁸ E. Patlagean, "Ancienne hagiographie et histoire sociale," *Annales E. S. C.* 23 (1968): 106-26, Eng. trans. in St. Wilson, ed., *Saints and Their Cults* (Cambridge, 1985), 101-22.

In a region shared by Jews, Christians, and starting from the ninth century, also by Muslims, hagiographic literature offers a tangible description of the dynamics between the members of these communities. In this article I would like to focus on the local literary representation of renegades, and to examine it in view of the general Byzantine perception of conversion. I will show that, although the Jewish figure was used to define Byzantine Christian identity as a religious contrast, Jews were part of everyday life and were not considered outsiders. This perception challenges the political importance of conversion as a means of “national” and/or religious consolidation. Furthermore, it is also related to the question of the definition of Byzantium as an empire of a single religious culture. In what follows I will examine such a definition in view of the way conversion was perceived and represented from a local and peripheral perspective.

II. THE HAGIOGRAPHY OF BYZANTINE ITALY

The hagiographic production of Byzantine Sicily and southern Italy is normally divided into two periods: before and after the Muslim arrival in the region. Stefano Caruso has characterized the hagiography that was written in the region during the late ninth to eleventh centuries as historical, since it bears witness to actual local historical events.⁹ Although this characterization is somewhat problematic, as recently shown by Augusta Acconcia Longo, it is clear that local hagiographic writing does change towards the end of the ninth century, in both form and content.¹⁰ Although Acconcia Longo has revealed the historical context of some of the early hagiographic narratives, it is still very difficult to contextualize most of the texts that were written before the ninth century and to date them properly.¹¹ Marginal indices related to political and religious issues as well as topographical descriptions are normally used to anchor the texts of the sixth to eighth centuries

⁹ S. Caruso, “Sicilia e Calabria nell’agiografia storica italogreca,” in *Calabria Cristiana. Società religione cultura nel territorio della diocesi di Oppido Mamertina—Palmi*, ed., S. Leanza (Soveria Mannelli, 1999) vol. 1, 563–604.

¹⁰ A. Acconcia Longo, “La Vita di Zosimo vescovo di Siracusa: un esempio di ‘agiografia storica’,” *RSBN* 36 (1999): 5–18.

¹¹ Loc. Cit. A. Acconcia Longo, “Siracusa e Taormina nell’agiografia italogreca,” *RSBN* 27 (1990): 33–54. A. Acconcia Longo, “I vescovi nell’agiografia italogreca: il contributo dell’agiografia alla storia delle diocesi italogreche,” in *Histoire et Culture dans l’Italie Byzantine*, eds., A. Jacob, J.-M. Martin and Gh. Noyé (Rome, 2006), 127–53.

in the history of the region. Nonetheless, even the most detailed texts which are rich in historical descriptions, such as the *Life of Pankratius the Bishop of Taormina*, are impossible to date precisely.¹² This is also the case, for example, with the *Life of Leon of Catania*. There is still a debate whether or not this was originally written as an Iconoclastic hagiography.¹³ In either case, it is clear that what remains of this text is only a mutation of the original, whatever the reason for the changes that this text underwent may be.

As far as the representation of the Jew is concerned, the local hagiography of the sixth to ninth centuries can be divided into texts which deal directly with the Jewish presence in the region and texts which ignore it. The *Life of Leon of Catania*, for instance, is characteristic of the second kind, in mentioning a Jew as the sorcerer who brings Heliodoros, the protagonist, in contact with the devil.¹⁴ This sorcerer figure is mentioned only once. The same is true for other Greek as well as Latin *Lives* (thus for example the *Life of Gregorios of Agrigento* and the *Passion of Vitus*).¹⁵ There are, however, other texts which give much more place to the Jews of the region. Evidence for such texts has survived in a tenth-century manuscript *Vat. gr. 1591*. Copied in 964 probably in Calabria, this manuscript brings together a cycle of hagiographic *Lives* and episodes, all of which are attributed to local Sicilian saints.¹⁶ The manuscript is unique in its content, since it follows a

¹² I am grateful to Elizabeth Jeffreys, who directed me to Cynthia Stallman-Pacitti's yet unpublished thesis at the Bodleian Library: C. Stallman-Pacitti (ed.) *The Life of S. Pancratius of Taormina*, thesis (PhD. diss., Oxford, 1986) 2 vols. See also Longo, "Siracusa," op. cit. E. Patlagean, "Les moines grecs d'Italie et l'apologie des these pontificales (VIII^e-IX^e siècles)," *Studi Medievali* 5/2 (1964): 579-602.

¹³ A. Acconcia Longo, "La Vita di S. Leone vescovo di Catania e gli incantesimi del mago Eliodoro," *RSBN* 26 (1989): 1-98; M.-F. Auzépy, "L'analyse littéraire et l'historien: l'exemple des vies de saints iconoclasts," *Byzantinoslavica* 53 (1992): 56-67; A. Acconcia Longo, "A proposito di un articolo recente sull'agiografia iconoclasta," *RSBS* 29 (1992): 3-17; M.-F. Auzépy, "A propos des vies de saints iconoclasts," *RSBS* 30 (1993): 3-5; A. Acconcia Longo "Di nuovo sull'agiografia iconoclasta," *RSBN* 30 (1993): 7-15; Von Falkenhausen, op. cit., 35.

¹⁴ A. Acconcia Longo, "La Vita," op. cit., 55-6.

¹⁵ In the *Life of Gregorios of Agrigento* no Jew is mentioned, though its editor, Albrecht Berger, suggests that the idol *Eber*, whom the saint fights, could be a reference to the Jews (from the word 'Ebraioi): A. Berger, *Das Leben des heiligen Gregorios von Agrigent* (Berlin, 1995), 46-7, 266. For the *Passion of Vitus*, see *Act. SS. Jun. II:1021-1026*. For the *Life of Zosimos of Syracuse*, see *infra* n. 25.

¹⁶ A detailed description of the manuscript is found in the thesis of Cynthia Jean Stallman (*supra* n. 11). Patlagean, "Les moines," op. cit. For the works of Re and Gerbino see *infra* n. 26.

geographic plan rather than a liturgical one. It contains the following hagiographic narratives:

The Life of Pankratios the Bishop of Taormina (fol. 1r–107v), BHG 1410a.

The Passion of Alphios, Philadelphos and Quirinos (fol. 110r–147v), BHG 57.

Also attributed to Alphios Philadelphos and Quirinos are the following postmortem episodes:

The story of the revelation of Alexandros' wife (fol. 147v–153v), BHG 58.

The story of Agathon the Bishop of Lipari (fol. 153v–165v), BHG 59.

The story of an haemorrhagic woman and her daughter (fol. 165v–182r), BHG 60.

The story of Birgantinos the blind and his father (fol. 182r–204v), BHG 61.

The story of Samuel, the Jewish leper (fol. 204r–216v), BHG 62.

In an article published in 2001, Aldo Messina argues that this hagiographic cycle was written very close to the date of the copying of the manuscript, in the tenth century, in order to portray the glory of the saints of the region, in view of the terrible situation of the Christian population in tenth-century Sicily.¹⁷ Messina situates the production of these texts in the Monastery of S. Filippo di Fragalà in Sicily. This theory, which has been criticized by Acconcia Longo¹⁸ presents a general problem in the analysis of local hagiography: are we to read the political agenda it represents in relation to the events narrated, or are we to assume that it presents an historical anachronism and thus portrays the author's manipulation of the past for his present agenda? In other words, in view of the central role that allegory plays in Christian literature, what are the rules for interpreting an allegorical reading? This resembles the problems in scrutinizing the literary figure of the Jew which Olster has tried to address, and complicates the question of the representation of the Jew in Christian literature. According to such perspectives, the literary representation is dependent on the historical context, on the background of which the scholar chooses to analyze it.

¹⁷ A. Messina, "Il codice Vat. gr. 1591 ed il romanzo agiografico siciliano," *Byzantion* 71/1 (2001): 194–211.

¹⁸ A. Acconcia Longo, "La data della Vita di S. Pancrazio di Taormina," *Bollettino della badia greca di Grottaferrata* 55 (2001): 37–42.

I would like to address this problem by focusing on the figure of the Jew in the hagiographic cycle of *Vat. gr. 1591*.

III. CHRISTIANS, JEWS, PAGANS

This manuscript brings together the *Life of Pankratios*, the first bishop of Taormina (*BHG* 1410a), which occupies 107 folios of the manuscript, with a cycle of episodes attributed to the three martyrs of Lentini: Alphios, Philadelphos, and Quirinos (*BHG* 57–62), found in the second part of the manuscript. The local Jews are omnipresent in these texts, which occasionally mention their conversion. The authors (it is evident that there are more than one author) situate their texts in the Roman Empire, emphasizing the combat of the martyr against the pagan Roman authorities. The theme of conversion appears in many of these texts in relation to both pagans and Jews, but never together.

The *Life of Pankratios* of Taormina follows Pankratios's and Markianos's mission from Asia Minor, on their journey to spread Christianity in Sicily.¹⁹ Sent by Peter, Pankratios arrives in Taormina, and Markianos in Syracuse. In both cities they confront the local population, which includes the Roman authorities, the local pagans, and the Jewish and Montanist communities. The saints combat the local pagan priests and destroy their temples. This victory leads to the conversion of the pagan population to Christianity. The fate of the local Jews and Montanists (the Montanists are otherwise unknown in the region) is different.²⁰ These two groups combine forces with the Roman archon of the city, and openly confront the saint.²¹ Pankratios expels the Jewish and Montanist communities from the city in an episode that ends with their drowning in the city's harbor.²² In the same manner, the Jews and Montanists of Syracuse fight Markianos, who has managed to convert their children to Christianity without their parents' consent.²³ I have argued elsewhere that the figure of the Jew represented here as an idolater and polytheist could well serve an anti-iconoclast agenda

¹⁹ Stallman-Pacitti, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 67ff.

²⁰ For the Montanists see von Falkenhausen, *op. cit.*, 33–4.

²¹ Stallman-Pacitti, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 23–5, 181–2, 231–61, 281, 340–2.

²² *Ibid.*, 261.

²³ *Ibid.*, 342.

of the author.²⁴ This would suit the dating of this work to the eighth century. Both Jews and heretics (in this case, Montanists) are put on the same level as those who refuse conversion and combine forces with the Roman archon, while the pagans all become good Christians.²⁵

This is not the case in the hagiographic cycle of the martyrs of Lentini: Alphios, Philadelphos, and Quirinos, in which Jews and pagans alike convert to Christianity. In fact, if we analyze this cycle closely, although the theme of conversion is used in relation to pagans, we will find that most of the converts are actually Jews.

The *Passion* of the three brothers opens with the story of their coming from the land of the Basques to Rome; their encounter with the Emperor Licinius; and their deportation to Sicily.²⁶ From Messina they are taken to Taormina, and finally arrive at Lentini, where most of the narrative takes place. The city's population is composed of pagans, Christians (first and second generation), and Jews. The brothers' arrival in Lentini is accompanied by an exorcism which they perform on a Jewish child possessed by a demon.²⁷ This results in the conversion of the entire family, as well as the conversion of twenty soldiers. The conversions take place in the mountains where the local clergy have fled to escape persecution by Tertullus, the eparch of Sicily.²⁸ The converted Jewish family, together with other Jews of the city, declare their Christian faith openly, and are also imprisoned together with the three brothers.²⁹ Most of the conversion of the local population of Lentini takes place after the martyrs have been executed, when many declare

²⁴ Y. Rotman, "Christian, Jews, and Muslim in Byzantine Italy: Medieval Conflicts in Local Perspective," in *The Byzantine World*, ed., P. Stephenson (New York, 2010), 223–235.

²⁵ Compare with the Latin *Life* of Zosimos bishop of Syracuse (BHL 9026), in which the Jews of the city bribe the *princeps* of the city in order to build a synagogue: AASS Mars. III, 842; von Falkenhausen, op. cit., 32. For the Greek versions of this *Life* see: M. Re "La Vita di s. Zosimo vescovo di Siracusa: qualche osservazione," *RSBN* (2000): 29–42; M. Re, "Il sinassario per S. Zosimo di Siracusa trådito dai testimoni della *recensio* M*. Edizioni del testo e traduzione," *RSBN* 38 (2001): 3–26.

²⁶ I am grateful to Mario Re for sending me his latest exhaustive study: *Il codice lentinese dei santi Alfio, Filadelfo e Cirino*. Studio paleografico e filologico (Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici (Palermo, 2007). See the full summary of the *passion* prepared by Gerbino in *ibid.*, 55–64; C. Gerbino, "Appunti per una edizione dell'agiografia di Lentini," *BZ* 85/5 (1992): 26–36.

²⁷ AASS Maii II, 777–8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 778.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 785–6. Paragraphs 1–47 are given in Greek by Papebroch in AASS Maii II, pp. 772–788 (I follow here the summary of Gerbino in Re, *Il codice*," op. cit., 55–64).

themselves Christian and come to worship the relics of the three saints. The relics, which were buried after the martyrs' execution in Thekla's underground room, nevertheless mysteriously disappear.³⁰

The struggle between the pagans and the Christians of the city takes place in another episode, the story of Agathon the bishop of Lipari (*BHG* 59).³¹ He intervenes when the two communities are about to stone each other. But the person who saves the day is Eutropia, whom we shall meet along with Thekla in another hagiographic story which ends the manuscript. This episode is also attributed to the three martyrs of Lentini, and is entirely dedicated to the conversion of the Jewish community of the city. This is the story of Samuel the Leper, the head of the Jewish community of Lentini (the word "Rabbi" is not mentioned). The local Jews who are presented here are not only at the center of the plot, they are also its subject. This is the story of the conversion of the head of the Jewish community together with a large part of his people. The episode (*BHG* 62), has survived in three manuscripts: *Vat. gr. 1591*; *Athon. Lavra 434*; *Vindob. hist. gr. 19*.³² As recently demonstrated by Mario Re, the Latin summary given by Papebroch in *AASS Maii II* probably followed a fourth manuscript version.³³ The story provides a representation of Jewish communal life and a clear description of Jewish relationships with Christians in a provincial Sicilian city. A brief summary is given here of folios 204r–216v of this manuscript:

Samuel has suffered from a serious case of leprosy for twenty-two years. He has lost the fingers of both hands and legs, as well as his nose and ears. The Jewish community, closely attached to its leader, has turned his house into a synagogue where they celebrate the Sabbaths and festivals. The story starts when his wife Susanna goes to seek advice from Eutropia, a woman of great knowledge, who is consulted by both Jews and Christians. Samuel's condition has deteriorated, she says, and begs for advice. Eutropia tells her that Samuel will be saved only if he believes in God, Christ the Son, and the martyr saints of the city. Susanna replies that this will never happen, since Samuel would

³⁰ *AASS Maii II*, 536–7 (in Latin translation of Papebroch).

³¹ *Vat. gr. 1591*, folios 165v ff., translated into Latin by Papebroch in *AASS Maii II*, 537ff.

³² C. Gerbino, "Appunti," *op. cit.*

³³ *AASS Maii II*, 502–550 (Samuel's story is summarized in Latin *ibid.*, 548). Re, *Il codice*, *op. cit.*, 51–3.

be better dead than renounce the laws of their ancestors. Besides, she says, the entire Jewish people (*to ethnos*) is constantly in their house and will not allow such a thing.

In the meantime Samuel has a dream. The three martyrs visit him in his dream, and cure his right hand of leprosy. They advise him to go to the house of Thekla if he wants to be completely cured. When he wakes up, Samuel cries out that he has turned into a Christian and will henceforth believe in Jesus Christ. His sons and daughters hurry to him and engage him in a short debate about the faith of their fathers. It is Satan, Samuel says, who blinded their ancestors and prevented them from recognizing in Jesus the sayings of the prophets. Although his children do not seem genuinely convinced, they are willing to follow his request. They carry him to the house of Thekla. Thekla, who guards the relics of the three martyrs of the city in her underground room, receives Samuel and lays him down in a bed. At midnight the three martyrs come to life out of the muddy earth and put on flesh. They appear to Thekla, half real, half phantom, and tell her and the bishop of the city, Neophytos, exactly what they need to do in order to cure Samuel. In addition they instruct them to name him Donatos, to baptize him, and to appoint him as priest in a nearby village. When Samuel wakes up he immediately renounces Judaism (*ἡ πίστις τὸν ἰουδαϊὸν*). He then receives his new name: Donatos. His sons, daughters, and his two nephews, amazed by the miracle of his healing, follow his example and receive Christian names. This happens as well to all the members of his household: slaves and servants, men and women; all except his wife, who, according to the story, had not yet returned from her visit to Eutropia. Samuel and his children, not yet baptized, continue to stay in the house of Thekla. Samuel then sends for his property in gold and silver and hands it to Thekla to use for the glory of the three martyrs.

When the Jews hear what has happened they gather and fast for three days, after which they enter the city together with Samuel's wife. They go directly to the house of Thekla and demand to have their leader back: "What have you done to us, O Kyria Thekla?" they cry, "Why did you take our father and leave us, like a herd without a shepherd, orphans?" When the Christians of the city hear what is happening, they come in haste to defend Thekla from the Jews. The Jews pick up stones to throw at them. When the Christians do the same, a Jewish woman, Judith, comes out to separate the two groups and manages to calm them down. Then Samuel steps out from Thekla's house and

asks the Jews what it is that they want. They reply that they want their father back, the one who renounced their laws and gods and decided to follow Christ, the so-called Messiah, whom their priests crucified and killed. Since they do not recognize Samuel, he tries to convince them that their leader is dead. Their reply, "No, he did not die," serves here as a proof of the blindness of the Jews caused by the devil. When they finally understand that the person speaking to them is indeed Samuel who was healed, they claim that it was the divine providence of their gods (*oi theoi hmôn*) who have cured him. This is the third time in the text that the Jews are portrayed as polytheists.³⁴ In what follows, Samuel preaches to them, explaining the reason why Jesus was the true Messiah, whose coming the prophets foretold in the Old Testament. He narrates the story of Jesus's crucifixion, and argues that this was not foretold by the prophets and was conducted in opposition to divine justice. The Jews, who cannot answer him on this point, remain silent. It is then that Samuel asks them to convert through him. The Christians, who are also there listening, are amazed by the knowledge and wisdom of the 'former Jew' (*o apo tôn 'Ebraiôn*). But the Jews, who are still speechless, bow and leave the place. Nonetheless, many of them are amazed by what has happened and begin to question their faith. Some see it as a divine sign, and during the night return to the city in order to be baptized. This ends the first half of the story.

In the second part, Thekla decides to erect a shrine for the martyrs who up to then have been buried in her muddy underground room. She commissions builders and stonemasons, but then a horrible storm, "the act of the devil," buries them alive in the quarry under a pile of stones, together with Samuel, his sons, and his nephews. The entire city, the Jews included, all believe the men to be dead. But once Thekla arrives and prays, the martyrs save the men, who then manage to get out alive. It is this miracle that convinces more Jews to convert, but not all of them. The story ends with Samuel's baptism. He is then appointed as a priest and is sent together with his sons as deacons to Antziano. The text ends with a dispute between Kirskis, the bishop of Lentini, and the archbishop Lucianos, on the subject of the relics in Antziano.

³⁴ This was also their attribute in the *Life of Pankratios of Taormina*: Stallman-Pacitti, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 23–5, 118, 242.

The text offers much information about the representation of the Jewish community of a Sicilian town during the seventh century. Both communities, the Jewish and the Christian, are portrayed as equals in size, in activities, and in the dialogue between them. In a recent study of this text, Maria Vittoria Strazzeri has analyzed its historical elements and situated it in East Sicily in the second half of the seventh century (between 649 and 698).³⁵ Her analysis reveals the local ecclesiastical dynamics in the region of the diocese of Lentini at the time of the monothelitical controversy, and constructs the religious, political, and historical context of the composition of the text. I will not summarise here her remarkable thesis, which is brilliantly argued. However, I would like to address the question of the conversion of the Jewish community of Lentini. Strazzeri does not see this as a literary *topos*, but as an historical indication of the conversion of Samuel/Donatos and of his appointment as the priest of the parish of Antziano (identified by her with S. Angelo di Boro). She also sees in the conversion of a large part of the local Jewish community a possible reference to the forced conversion imposed by Heraclius in 630/631, and links it with the historical origin of a folklore feast celebrated each year in the Holy Week by the community of San Fratello in Sicily. This forms both the starting and end points of Strazzeri's article.

IV. SIX STORIES OF CONVERSION OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Whether or not the Jews of Lentini converted to Christianity is, of course, a question that cannot be answered on the basis of hagiography alone. However, the question of the literary *topos* of the conversion of a Jewish community as presented in this text merits a closer examination. In what follows I would like to compare this story to other narratives whose main theme is a public conversion of a Jewish community in the context of a local Christian-Jewish rivalry. I will refer to five such texts:

³⁵ I am grateful to Vera von Falkenhausen for this article: M. Strazzeri, "I giudei di San Fratello," in *Ubi neque aerugo neque tinea demolitur. Studi in onore di Luigi Pellegrini per i suoi settanta anni*, ed., M. del Fuoco (Liguori, 2006), 647–89.

- 1) The *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*
- 2) The *Dialexis* in the dossier of Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar
- 3) The conversion of the Jews of Tomei
- 4) The conversion of the Jews of Minorca in the *Epistula Severi*
- 5) The conversion of the Jews of Clermont

All of these texts could be considered either chronologically or geographically close to the account of the conversion of the Jews of Lentini as presented in *Vat. gr. 1591*. The first three are products of Byzantine literature. In contrast to the *Dialexis* and *Doctrina Jacobi*, whose Greek versions have survived, the account of the conversion of the Jews of Tomei has come down to us only in an Arabic translation (from either a Greek or a Coptic original). None of the three are dated, in contrast to the last two texts, which were written in the Latin West and are both dated by their authors.

The *Doctrina Jacobi* starts with the forced conversion of the Jewish community of Carthage, imposed by Heraclius.³⁶ Jacob, the Jew who has been converted against his will, the protagonist of the story, becomes convinced, following an appearance of a man in a dream, that Jesus is the true Messiah. He then starts to preach the Christian doctrine to the other members of his community who, although baptized, still reject the Christian faith. The core of the text is then dedicated to two theological debates. The first is between Jacob and the local baptized Jewish community, and the second is between Jacob and Ioustos, a non-baptized Jew who happens to pass through the city. In the end all of the Jews acknowledge the Christian faith, and both Jacob and Ioustos embark on a mission to spread Christianity to other Jewish communities. According to its editors, Dagron and Déroche, the text dates to some time between 632 and 646/647.³⁷

In contrast, the *Dialexis*, attributed to Gregentios the Archbishop of Taphar, is much later, and according to its editor, Albrecht Berger, dates from the middle of the tenth century.³⁸ The entire *Dialexis* is a theological debate between Gregentios and the Jewish leader Herban

³⁶ Edited and translated by G. Dagron and V. Déroche, "Juifs et Chrétiens," op. cit.

³⁷ Although a much later date was also proposed by Speck: P. Speck, "Die *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*," *Varia* 6 (1997): 267–439, pp. 436–9. See the discussion in A. Berger, *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios: Archbishop of Taphar* (Berlin, 2006), 106.

³⁸ Berger, *Life*, op. cit., 100–9.

that takes place in the city of Taphar in the Himyarite kingdom.³⁹ The public debate ends in the conversion of Herban and the entire Jewish community to Christianity.⁴⁰ Olster argues that in any case the text cannot be prior to 680/681 since it refers to the Monotheistical controversy of the Council of Constantinople. But Berger sees here references to the forced conversion imposed by Basil I. The date of the text to the tenth century has not been definitively established.⁴¹

These two texts, which according to their manuscript tradition were known and copied in the Byzantine Empire,⁴² do not resemble the case of Samuel for two reasons. First, their main concern is a theological polemic. In both cases the debate between the Christian and the Jewish points of view ends with conversion: in the case of the *Dialexis*, the conversion of the Jewish community; in the case of the *Doctrina Jacobi*, which opens with a public conversion, the conversion of the Jew Ioustos, and his mission to other Jewish communities. Second, while the *Dialexis* is attributed to Saint Gregentios, it is not presented as a hagiographic work. In this it resembles the *Doctrina Jacobi*. In fact, as Berger shows, it has an independent manuscript tradition, and was probably written by a later author than that of the *Life* of Gregentios.⁴³

The story of the conversion of the Jews of Tomei also deals with a Jewish-Christian debate.⁴⁴ It is also said to have taken place under Heraclius, but prior to his decree of forced conversion, in 622. How-

³⁹ Himyar was an independent kingdom in the sixth century in the South Arabia (modern Yemen). *Taphar* is the Greek transliteration of the city of Zafar. Judaism was widespread in Himyar in Antiquity; Christianity arrived in the fourth century; the Muslim conquest in the seventh century. See P. Yule, *Himyar: Spätantike im Jemen* (Stuttgart, 2007); J. Beaucamp, Fr. Briquel-Chatonnet, Chr. J. Robin, eds., *Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux V^e et VI^e siècles: regards croisés sur les sources* (Paris, 2010); and the online excavations report by P. Yule, Kr. Franke, C. Meyer, G. W. Nebe, Ch. Robin and C. Wirzel, *Zafar, Capital of Himyar, Ibb Province: First Preliminary Report: Summer 1998 and Autumn 2000*: http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/propylaeumdok/frontdoor.php?source_opus=127&la=de (November 11, 2010).

⁴⁰ Berger, *Life*, op. cit., 796–8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 94. Olster, op. cit., 140.

⁴² Dagrón and Déroche give seven Greek manuscripts in their edition along with four non-Greek versions (op. cit., 68). The *Dialexis* is noted in fifty medieval manuscripts (Berger, op. cit., 141–58).

⁴³ As far as medieval manuscripts are concerned, the *Dialexis* appears in 41 manuscripts on its own, and is adjacent to the *Life* in 9 medieval manuscripts. The *Life* appears without the *Dialexis* only in one Modern Greek Paraphrase manuscript: *Athots, Baropediou, cod.* 92 from the year 1876 (Berger, op. cit., 141–58).

⁴⁴ R. Griveau, "Histoire de la conversion des juifs habitant la ville de Tomei en Egypte d'après d'anciens manuscrits arabes," *ROC* 2^{ème} série 3 (1908): 298–313.

ever, the text post-dates the Islamic conquest of Egypt, which is mentioned towards the end of the account. At the center of the account we find a wager between two monks from the monastery of Saint Anthony, and the head of the Jewish community of Tomei, a Levite Jew named Amran:⁴⁵ they will argue on the interpretation of the scriptures until one of the two parties is unable to answer back. The one who loses the debate will have to convert to the opposing religion. Although important and indeed indispensable, the debate itself does not occupy a large part of the text. After the short debate, Amran is convinced of the truth of the Christian faith and declares his wish to be baptized along with "his tribe." The baptism of the entire community of 375 persons then follows, conducted by the bishop of the region.

During the baptism a miracle happens: the image of John the Baptist as he is baptizing Christ appears on the wall of the baptistery. Just as in the case of Samuel of Lentini, the bishop ordains the head of the Jewish community as a priest, here with the name Paul. The story ends with the two of them participating in the election of a new patriarch of Alexandria (following the death of Andronikos in 622). They elect Anba Benjamin. It is then that the bishop of Tomei, Anba Yasib, who baptized the Jews of Tomei, reads in public the narration of the entire controversy between Amran and the two monks. The patriarch recognizes the appearance of John the Baptist's image during the baptism of the Jews as a miracle. Later on, when Anba Yasib dies, the patriarch ordains Amran/Paul as bishop. The story ends with Amran/Paul fortifying the belief in Jesus Christ after the Muslim conquest of Egypt, followed by his death.

Just like the Jewish community of Taphar in the *Dialexis*, here too the conversion is the result of a public Jewish-Christian theological debate conducted by the head of the Jewish community.⁴⁶ However, the theological debate is given much less space here than in the *Doctrina Jacobi* and the *Dialexis*. Moreover, this text is much more informative, containing historical references that would suggest a dating to the second half of the seventh century, between 640 (the Arab conquest of Egypt) and 661 (the death of the patriarch Benjamin I of Alexandria). The main protagonist is a converted Jew who, just as in

⁴⁵ The word "Amran" in the Arabic manuscripts, is probably a result of confusion of the m and the n in the original Greek/Coptic. Amram was, of course, the name of Moses's father, a Levite too.

⁴⁶ For a possible identification of the Jew Hebran, as the "Rabban" (the Rabbi), see Berger, *Life*. op. cit., 108.

the case of Samuel of Lentini, is ordained as a priest and becomes a bishop. However, unlike the case of Samuel and the *Dialexis*, the narrative has no hagiographic attributes. The miracle of the appearance of the image of John the Baptist is recognized as originating in the act of the baptism of the Jews, and is not attributed to the local bishop of Tomei.⁴⁷ In this, it is much more like the Latin stories about the conversion of two Jewish communities in the Latin West.

V. CONVERSION AS AN HISTORICAL EVENT

Two other cases of massive conversion of Jews are attested for the communities of the island of Minorca and the city of Clermont. The first is said to have taken place in 418, and is narrated by the bishop Severus of Minorca in his epistle, which was probably written very close to the events.⁴⁸ The second is said to have taken place in 576. The story has come down in two versions: in Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks* and in a poem written by Venantius Fortunatus commissioned by Gregory.⁴⁹ They are important pieces of evidence for the analysis of the Lentini story, since they provide a non-Byzantine point of view on the subject of the conversion of Jews in Mediterranean cities. The case of the conversion of the entire community of Minorca is, as we shall see, particularly important for our case, since it presents many lines of resemblance to the Lentini story.

As Scott Bradbury, the editor of this document, has argued, the authenticity of this source is no longer questioned.⁵⁰ However, this does not necessarily mean that the events occurred just as the author narrated them. In any case, we are interested here not in the actual

⁴⁷ Griveau, *op. cit.*, 311.

⁴⁸ Severus of Minorca, *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, ed. and trans. S. Bradbury (Oxford, 1996).

⁴⁹ Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, V, 11; Fortunatus, *Carmina* 5.5, F. Leo, ed., *MGH, Auctores antiquissimi*, vol. 4, 107–12; W. Goffart, "The Conversion of Avitus of Clermont, and Similar Passages in Gregory of Tours," in "To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, 'Others' in Late Antiquity," eds., J. Neusner and E. Freuchs (Chico, 1985), 473–97; B. Brennan, "The Conversion of the Jews of Clermont in A.D. 576," *Jour. Theo. Stud.* 36/2 (1985): 321–37; B. Blumenkranz, *Juifs et Chrétiens dans le monde occidental 430–1096* (Mouton, 1960), 140–1; M. Reydellet, "La conversion des juifs de Clermont en 576," in *De Tertullien aux Mozarabes*, vol. 1, *Antiquité tardive et christianisme ancien (III^e–VI^e siècles)*, eds., L. Holtz and J.-Cl. Fredouille (Paris, 1992), 373–9.

⁵⁰ Severus of Minorca, *op. cit.*, 9–16.

conversion of the Jews, but in the way their conversion is presented. As we saw, the story of the community of Tomei is the most 'historical' of the three Byzantine sources. The theological debate, the center of the *Doctrina Jacobi* and the *Dialexis*, is here reduced to a minimum and is not even at the center of events. The conversion is much more important than the Christian-Jewish debate. This is also the case with Severus's epistle.

The rivalry between the Jewish and Christian communities of Magona is embodied in two persons: Severus the bishop, and Theodorus, the head of the Jewish community, admired by Jews and Christians alike. The events that led to the conversion of 540 Jews occurred during the eight days before Lent.⁵¹ The conversion is foretold to Theodorus and a Christian woman in two dreams. The tension between the two communities is so great that they decide to prepare for an open confrontation. This results in a fire in which the synagogue is destroyed. The following day a Jew named Reuben has a dream, following which he converts to Christianity. Other Jews who "see the light" convert as well. Theodorus, who witnesses the confusion in the Jewish congregation, is convinced by Reuben to convert, and prior to his conversion addresses his congregation, openly calling them to have faith in Christ. This is followed by a mass conversion of the Jewish community and the conversion of Theodorus himself. The last ones to convert are two women. Only one woman retains her faith and leaves the island altogether.

Just as in the case of Samuel, the protagonist in this story is the leader of the Jewish community. In addition, the public conversion of the Jews is presented on the background of tension and armed clashes between the two communities, who are shown as equal in size and social position. More important are the connections which the two authors make between the conversion of the Jews and local saints' relics. In the case of Samuel, his conversion is attributed to the three martyrs of Lentini, while the conversion of the Jews of Minorca is attributed to the relics of St. Stephen, whose arrival on the island opens the story. Another line of resemblance is the place given to the woman in both narratives. We saw four women protagonists (two Christian and two Jewish) in the story of Samuel. In his epistle, Severus attributes a central role to five women (four Jews and one Christian). But

⁵¹ Ibid., 84ff.

the two cases bear a resemblance especially in the way they present the conversion as an historical event. In this they are similar to the accounts of the conversion of the Jews of Tomei, and the conversion of the Jews of Clermont.

In his *History of the Franks*, Gregory of Tours narrates the events that occurred between Easter and Pentecost in the year 576, when a procession including a Jew upon his conversion was interrupted by another Jew, who poured rancid oil over the head of the convert.⁵² This started riots between the two communities, which resulted in the destruction of the local synagogue, and the conversion of more than 500 Jews. The person who orchestrated the entire event was Avitus, the bishop of Clermont. Gregory, who was a native of Clermont and friend of Avitus, commissioned a poem on the events from Venantius Fortunatus.⁵³ Although the circumstances of the riots are not mentioned in his poem, Fortunatus does give Avitus a leading role in the conversion of the community. According to his version, the conversion resulted from Avitus's ultimatum to the local Jews: conversion or exile. In both sources the Jews who did not convert emigrated to Marseilles. Walter Goffart has shown how Gregory in this story emphasizes the voluntary conversion, in contrast to the forced conversions by King Chilperic (561–584).⁵⁴

The six cases of a mass conversion of Jewish communities have many identical elements that I will summarize in the following table (organized more or less chronologically):

Jewish community of (date of narrative)	Minorca (418+)	Clermont (576+) ⁵⁵	Carthage (632–646/7)	Tomei (641+)	Lentini (649–698)	Taphar (?10th C)
Public theological debate			+	+	+	+
Armed confrontation	+	+			+	
The “head of the Jews”	+			+	+	+
Local bishop	+	+		+, & monks	+	+
Women protagonists	+				+	
Saints/relics	+				+	+
Miracles				+	+	

⁵² Gregory of Tours, *op. cit.*, V, 11.

⁵³ *Supra*. n. 49.

⁵⁴ Goffart, *op. cit.* This explains also why Avitus's ultimatum is omitted in Gregory's version, which would not have presented the conversion of the Jews as completely voluntary. Note that just as in Severus's Epistle, the Jews who do not convert are forced to leave the city altogether.

⁵⁵ Gregory of Tours' description combined with Fortunatus's poem.

Table (cont.)

Jewish community of (date of narrative)	Minorca (418+)	Clermont (576+) ⁵⁵	Carthage (632–646/7)	Tomei (641+)	Lentini (649–698)	Taphar (?10th C)
Dreams	+		+		+	
All the Jews convert			+	+		+
Ref. to forced conversion		+	+			Indirect
Political context given		+	+			
Islam mentioned				+		

According to this table of literary/hagiographic representations of historical motifs, the Lentini story can be situated together with other narratives of the conversion of Jewish communities which are close to it in either time or place. I would not like to argue for a literary *topos* created in Late Antiquity of a conversion of a Jewish community that is later adopted by other Christian authors. We are dealing here with Latin, Greek, and possibly Coptic texts, which, as the table shows, also differ from one another. However, there are some important observations that should be drawn from this very brief examination.

First, the political context is given in only two of these texts, and it is directly connected to the question of forced conversion. All of the other texts present the conversion in miraculous terms, which tie the local bishop to a local saint or relics. Second, the conversion is always either the result or the cause of Jewish-Christian tension. This can be manifested either in an open theological debate, or, as is the case in half of the stories, in an armed confrontation (which the authors always present as initiated by the Jews).

The Lentini story is the only text in which we find both: an armed confrontation which is then transformed into a theological debate. In the same way, the confrontation between Jews and Christians in the epistle of Severus develops into a theological argument in which the first Jewish convert, Reuben, persuades the head of the community, Theodorus, to convert. If the debate between Justin Martyr and Trypho served as an archetype of Byzantine anti-Jewish polemic literature, we see from the table above that the theme of conversion is not necessarily connected to this but has an independent tradition of literary representation.⁵⁶ Whether or not all of these Jewish communities did in fact convert to Christianity, the Christian authors who chose the

⁵⁶ For the tradition of anti-Jewish polemic debate see: A. Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae contra Iudaeos. Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen antijüdischen Dialogliteratur*

theme of conversion as the main topic of their narratives used more or less the same elements to construct their story.

In all of the texts the Jews must be assimilated into the Christian majority. As the story about the Jews of Tomei shows, this is still the case even when the Christians are no longer in control of the political situation. The story of the conversion of the Jews of Tomei could, in fact, be understood as an ideological affirmation of the Christian community vis-à-vis the Muslim menace. This is very much in line with Olster's argument. Aldo Messina has proposed a similar explanation for the Sicilian hagiographic cycle of *Vat. gr. 1591*; namely, that the reason for portraying the victory of Christian saints of the past is to provide moral support vis-à-vis the Arab menace.⁵⁷ However, I would like to argue that the representation, and indeed the conceptualization of the theme of conversion changes completely once Islam is present in the region. The case of Tomei will prove to be exceptional.

VI. THE JEWISH PERSPECTIVE: FORCED CONVERSION, VOLUNTARY CONVERSION

"*The Chronicle [Scroll] of Ahima'az*" needs little introduction. Written in 1054 by a Jew from Capua, it contains a rich description of the Jewish communities of Byzantine Apulia. In order to collect stories about his family, Ahima'az ben Paltiel tells us he travelled from Capua to Apulia for his research.⁵⁸ Ahima'az's goal is to glorify his ancestors, who are all rabbis. The rabbis in the *Chronicle of Ahima'az* move around all of Southern Italy. Ahima'az reveals a network of local leaders spread out all over the Jewish communities: Oria, Bari, Beneventum, Venosa, Capua, and others. If we compare the literary representation of the

und ihrem Judenbild (Teubner, 1990); Déroche, "Polémique," op. cit.; Déroche, "L'apologie," op. cit.

⁵⁷ Messina, op. cit.; Longo, "La data," op. cit.

⁵⁸ B. Klar, ed., *Megilat Ahima'az: The Chronicle of Ahima'az* (Tarshish, 1973); R. Bonfil, *History and Folklore in a Medieval Jewish Chronicle: The Family Chronicle of Ahima'az ben Paltiel* (Leiden, 2009); M. Salzman, *The Chronicle of Ahima'az* (New York, 1924); C. Colafemmina, ed., *Sefer Yuhasin: libro delle discendenze, vicende di una famiglia ebraica di Oria nei secoli IX-XI* (Cassano delle Murge, 2001); R. Bonfil, "Mito, retorica, storia: saggio sul 'Rotolo di Ahima'az,'" in *Tra due mondi: cultura ebraica e cultura cristiana nel Medioevo*, ed., R. Bonfil (Liguori, 1996), 93-133; D. Benin, "The Chronicle of Ahima'az and its Place in Byzantine Literature," *Jerusalem Studies In Jewish Thought* IV 3/4 (1985): 237-50.

Byzantine rabbi to that of the Byzantine saint, we will see that both figures fulfill the same functions. Their role is first and foremost to protect their local community, and to preserve its social and religious order. This is also the case as far as conversion is concerned.

Ahima'az uses the theme of conversion in two episodes in relation to Rabbi Shefatya and his brother, Rabbi Hananel. The first needs to protect his community from the enforced conversion imposed by the Byzantine emperor, while the second confronts the danger of conversion to Christianity on a personal level.⁵⁹ The forced conversion imposed by Basil I is mentioned three times in the text.⁶⁰ It is said to have taken place, according to Ahima'az, in the year 868/9 (4628 AM). It is the only event dated by Ahima'az, apart from the date of his own writing. The messengers sent from Constantinople with the decree of conversion arrive in Apulia, and take Rabbi Shefatya back with them to Constantinople on the invitation of the emperor, who is troubled by a difficult problem: which is bigger, Hagia Sofia or Solomon's Temple? Rabbi Shefatya proves that the Old Temple was larger.⁶¹ He then manages to exorcise a demon who has possessed the emperor's daughter. In return, the emperor is ready to give him whatever he wishes. Rabbi Shefatya asks for the forced conversion to be cancelled, but the emperor replies that once his decree has already been published it cannot be cancelled. Instead he provides Rabbi Shefatya with a charter of immunity for his community in Oria that saves it from the forced conversion.⁶² The community is saved from conversion thanks both to the Rabbi's knowledge of the scriptures (he proves that Solomon's temple was bigger than Hagia Sofia) and his skills as an exorcist.

But conversion to Christianity is not always presented as entirely forced. Rabbi Shefatya's brother, Rabbi Hananel, after recklessly calculating the beginning of the month, gets involved in a wager about his calculation with the bishop of Oria. If he is wrong, the bishop will demand his conversion; if he is right, then he will get the value of the bishop's horse.⁶³ Rabbi Hananel, who did not pay enough attention to this wager, got his calculation wrong. When he realizes that he

⁵⁹ Klar, *op. cit.*, 17-9, 23-4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 17, 20, 28.

⁶¹ Klar, *op. cit.*, 17-9.

⁶² Susan Weingarten has rightly remarked that we find here a reference to a *topos* of another Scroll, *Megilat Esther*.

⁶³ Klar, *op. cit.*, 17-9.

will have to convert, he prays through the entire night. God answers his prayers and delays the moon's appearance by a day, and Rabbi Hananel, though he was wrong, is saved from the conversion he has brought upon himself.

We encountered both of these motifs, the debate and the wager between a Jew and a Christian, in Christian stories about the conversion of Jews. The Jewish author refers here to the forced conversion of Basil I, which is not mentioned in the Christian hagiographies of southern Italy.⁶⁴ Forced conversions, however, are mentioned in another Jewish source, the correspondence of Hisdai ibn-Shaprut. In a letter addressed to an influential Byzantine woman (probably the Empress Helena, the wife of Constantine Porphyrogenitos), dated probably to the 40s or 50s of the tenth century, he implores her to protect the Jews in her region from the influence of forced conversion.⁶⁵ He may be referring here to the forced conversion imposed by Romanos I Lekapenos in 943.⁶⁶ Although there is no direct reference here to Southern Italy, Hisdai ibn-Shaprut could also have meant the persecutions that the Jewish communities of Bari and Otranto suffered in the middle of the tenth century. These are known from another epistle sent to him by the Jews of Bari probably after 952, asking him to plead their case before the Byzantine rulers.⁶⁷ Jewish sources also provide evidence of another type of conversion, absent from Christian hagiography: proselytism to Judaism.

VII. PROSELYTISM IN JEWISH SOURCES

The six fragments attributed to the Norman priest John, re-named Obadiah on his conversion to Judaism, were all found in the Cairo Genizah, and together constitute what scholars have termed "the Scroll

⁶⁴ But is mentioned in a local chronicle, the *Sicilian-Saracen Chronicle*: in the year 873/874 Jews were baptized: G. Cozza-Luzi, ed., *La Cronaca siculo-saracena di Cambridge* (D. Lao & S. De Luca, 1890), 32, 103, following von Falkenhausen, *op. cit.* 35–6.

⁶⁵ He brings as an argument the protection he provided to the Christians and converts in Cordova: J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature* (Ktav, 1972) vol. 1, pp. 3–12, 21–3.

⁶⁶ On the forced conversion imposed by Romanos Lekapenos in 943 see: S. Schechter, "An Unknown Khazar Document," *JQR*, New Series 3/2 (1912): 181–219; Mann, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 11, n. 15. See also von Falkenhausen, *op. cit.*, 27.

⁶⁷ Mann, *op. cit.*, 12–6, 23–7. No forced conversion is mentioned here, but the authors write about Torah scrolls burnt and three Jewish leaders martyred.

of Obadiah the Proselyte.” Some of these texts have been studied by Adler, Mann, Assaf, Goitein, Scheiber, Prawer, and Blumenkranz, and they have all been edited with a commentary by Norman Golb. Golb has also identified Obadiah as the author of the earliest Jewish musical manuscript.⁶⁸

In the first document of the “Scroll of Obadiah,” the author tells the story of his conversion to Judaism in the year 1102, but begins with the story of another convert, Andreas the archbishop of Bari. According to this account Andreas left his position and the city and travelled with a group of his followers to Constantinople, where he was circumcised. This brought him much trouble. His followers also converted, and all of them finally escaped to Egypt.

Andreas was elected to the position of archbishop of Bari in 1062, and died in 1078. In 1066 Andreas is reported to have travelled to Constantinople, while the see of the archbishop of Bari is said to be occupied in 1073 by someone else.⁶⁹ This would indicate a date for his conversion between 1066 and 1073.⁷⁰

According to Obadiah, the story of Andreas’s conversion became famous throughout Byzantium and Italy, and was a source of embarrassment to Christians. John/Obadiah heard about Andreas’s conversion in his father’s house in his youth. The story presumably affected the author greatly, since he dedicates fifteen lines to it in the history of his own conversion. When he grew up, continues his autobiographic narrative, he witnessed a revelation of which just the first few lines of

⁶⁸ E. Adler, “Obadia le proselyte,” *REJ* 69 (1919): 129–34; J. Mann, “Obadya, Prosélyte Normand converti au judaïsme et sa Meguila,” *REJ* 89 (1930): 245–59; S. Assaf, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History* (Jerusalem, 1946), 149; S. Goitein, “Obadyah, A Norman Proselyte,” *JJS* 4 (1953): 74–84; A. Scheiber, “The Origins of ‘Obadyah, the Norman Proselyte: A New Fragment in the Kaufman Geniza Collection,” *JJS* 5 (1954): 32–7, repr. with additions in *idem*, *Geniza Studies* (New York, 1981), 45–279; J. Prawer, “The Autobiography of Obadiah the Norman Proselyte,” *Tarbiz* 45 (1976): 272–95; B. Blumenkranz, “La conversion au Judaïsme d’André, Archevêque de Bari,” *JJS* 14 (1963): 33–7; A. Momigliano, “A Medieval Jewish Autobiography,” in *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper*, eds., H. Llyod-Jones, V. Pearl and B. Worden (London, 1981), 30–6; A. De Rosa and M. Perani, eds., *Giovanni-Ovadiyah da Oppido, proselito, viaggiatore e musicista dell’età normanna; atti del convegno internazionale, Oppido Lucano, 28–30 marzo 2004* (Giuntina, 2005); R. Bonfil, “Ovadiyah da Oppido: riflessioni sul significato culturale di una conversione,” in *ibid.*, 45–54; N. Golb, “Megilat ‘Obadiah Hager,” in *Studies in Geniza and Sephardi Heritage presented to Shelomo Dov Goitein*, eds., S. Morag and I. Ben-Ami (Jerusalem, 1981), 77–107.

⁶⁹ Blumenkranz, “La conversion,” *op. cit.*, 34–5.

⁷⁰ And maybe not 1078 as *terminus ante quem*, according to Golb, *op. cit.*, 79–81.

his description have survived. A man appeared to him in dream when he was serving as a priest at the altar in the church of Oppido.⁷¹ The man called him: "Johannes..." This is the only fragment which deals with the author's conversion, dated to 1102, after which he left Italy and travelled to seven Jewish communities in Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Mesopotamia.⁷²

Although these cases became well known throughout the Empire, as John/Obadiah himself attests, we have no indications of Christian proselytes in the writings of Christians, including the local hagiography of Southern Italy. It goes without saying that the local Greek hagiography was not interested in proselytes in a period in which it still saw in the Muslims its main rival. However, there are conclusions to be drawn from the "Scroll of Obadiah" that concern the literary representation of the theme of conversion. It is clear that the author justifies his conversion by citing as a precedent the conversion of a highly important ecclesiastical figure. Moreover, in the story of John/Obadiah's conversion, we find the Christian hagiographic models of Jewish converts that we met in other stories of conversion, namely, the dream and revelation.

As the Jewish sources show, conversion of both Jews and Christians appears to have been not uncommon in the tenth to eleventh centuries in southern Italy. However, none of this is mentioned in the local Christian hagiography. In fact, the Jews are completely absent from the local hagiographic literature of the period.

VIII. CHRISTIANS, JEWS, AND MUSLIMS IN LOCAL HAGIOGRAPHY

Anti-Judaic polemic literature does not disappear once Islam arrives in the Byzantine world. However, it does not necessarily follow that this literature is remodelled and is used primarily as a response to Islam. Olster has suggested that the *Dialexis* between Gregentios and the Jew Herban is a response to the Arab political and religious threat of the seventh century rather than an anti-Jewish polemic.⁷³ It was probably

⁷¹ Only the three first Hebrew letters of the name of the city have survived.

⁷² B.-Z. Kedar, "The Voyages of Giuàn-Ovadiah in Syria and Iraq and the Enigma of his Conversion," in De Rosa and Perani, eds., op. cit., 133-47.

⁷³ Olster, op. cit., 138-54. For another possible dating see following note.

written in a Constantinopolitan environment in a later period.⁷⁴ The conversion of the Jewish community is not in itself the main theme here, but serves merely to mark the end of the theological debate with a Christian victory.

However, the theme of the Jewish convert appears in the literature of the ninth and tenth centuries with no relation to a Jewish-Christian theological polemic. This is first of all the case of the *Life of Constantine the Jew* (BHG 370), which has come down to us in a single manuscript.⁷⁵ The protagonist, a converted Jew, leaves his Jewish bride on their wedding day and embarks on a journey that leads him to a monastery near Nicaea. Later he sails to Cyprus and attempts to convert more Jews in the city of Nicaea.⁷⁶ No Muslims are mentioned in the text, which like the *Dialexis* between Gregentios and Herban, was probably written in Constantinople. A quite different perspective is presented by the hagiographers who wrote in regions of Christian-Muslim confrontations, where the religious menace of Islam was dominant.

In the *Life of Elias of Heliopolis*, the protagonist, Elias, finds himself under heavy pressure to convert. As an orphan boy, he is apprenticed to a Christian carpenter in the city of Damascus.⁷⁷ When the latter converts to Islam, and wants Elias to convert as well, Elias runs away.⁷⁸ Elias is a Christian inhabitant in Arab lands. The pressure to convert to Islam was also very strong on Byzantine prisoners of war. These found themselves sometimes sold as slaves. Byzantine hagiography of the ninth and tenth centuries explicitly develops the *topos* of the Byzantine inhabitant who is kidnapped by Arab pirates and finds himself/herself a captive in Arab lands.⁷⁹ This is the case of Joseph the Hymnograph, whose hymns have the moral purpose of strengthening the Christian faith of the Byzantine prisoners in Crete.⁸⁰

Although Byzantine hagiography is normally silent about Christian captives who convert to Islam, cases of renegades are occasionally

⁷⁴ Tenth-eleventh centuries according to Berger, *Life*, op. cit. 100–9.

⁷⁵ AASS Nov. IV, 628–56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 636–7, 642.

⁷⁷ A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, ed., *Life of Elias of Heliopolis*, *Pravoslavnij Palestinskij Sbornik* 19/3 (1907) ch. 5–6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 6–8 (the story is set in Damascus).

⁷⁹ Rotman, "Byzance face à l'Islam arabe," op. cit., 784–7.

⁸⁰ A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, ed., *Life of Joseph the Hymnograph*, *Monumenta graeca et latina ad historiam Photii patriarchae pertinentia*, vol. 2 (1901), 1–14, ch. 6ff.

mentioned.⁸¹ Such, for instance are a few inhabitants of Crete, who converted to Islam. Nikon “Repent-Yourself” embarks on a special mission to bring them back to Christianity.⁸² Since hagiography has a very strong moral agenda, it is very careful when portraying the Christian faith as threatened by another religion. Christian believers may be in danger, but the Christian faith must not be presented as endangered. On the contrary, Christianity must be presented as victorious. This representation is the main objective of Saints’ *Lives* written against the background of the Arab menace in the Mediterranean. The most famous example is the *Life of Elias the Younger*, a Sicilian saint, whose *Life* was probably written in Calabria in the 30s or 40s of the tenth century.⁸³ The text testifies to the gradual Arab conquest of Sicily. Elias himself is captured twice by Arab raiders. The second time, he finds himself sold as a slave in Ifriqiya. The entire story is modelled according to the biblical story of Joseph.⁸⁴ Captivity, slavery, and the misfortunes of Byzantine captives are here presented in the framework of a Christian mission. Elias’s destiny is to spread Christianity in Muslim lands. Indeed, his destiny is revealed to him in a dream when he is a child.⁸⁵ When he is finally emancipated by his master in Ifriqiya, he embarks on a pilgrimage which leads him to Egypt and Palestine. On the way he converts Muslims to Christianity.⁸⁶ This is the only place conversion is mentioned in the text. In fact, it is the only place the theme of conversion is mentioned in the Byzantine hagiography of southern Italy of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The *Life of Elias the Younger*, the *Life of Elias the Cave-dweller* (*spêlaiôtês*), the *Life of Vitali*, the *Life of Sabas the Younger*, the *Life of Luc of Demena* and the *Life of Nil of Rossano* are all products of Byzantine Calabria, and were written at a time when Sicily was already under Aghlabid rule, and Calabria itself was a target for Arab raids.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Y. Rotman, *Les Esclaves et l’Esclavage. De la Méditerranée antique à la Méditerranée médiévale. VI^e–XI^e siècles* (Paris, 2004), 72ff.

⁸² D. Sullivan, ed., *The Life of Saint Nikon* (Brookline, 1987), ch. 20, 82–4.

⁸³ G. Taibbi, ed., *Vita di Sant’Elia il Giovane* (Palermo, 1962).

⁸⁴ Rotman, *Les Esclaves*, *op.cit.*, 221–6.

⁸⁵ *Vita di Sant’Elia il Giovane*, *op. cit.*, ch. 4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 16.

⁸⁷ *Vita di Sant’Elia il Giovane*, *op. cit.* *The Life of Elias the Cave-dweller (spêlaiôtês):* “Vita S. Eliae Spelaetotae,” AASS Sept. III, 843–88; *The Life of Vitali*: AASS Mar. VI, *26–*35; G. Cozza-Luzi, ed., *The Life of Sabas the Younger: Historia et Laudes SS. Sabae et Macarii iuniorum e Sicilia Auctore Oreste patriarcha hierosolymitanus lymitano* (Rome, 1893); *The Life of Luc of Demena*: AASS Oct. VI, 332–42; P. Giovanelli,

Historians have noted that all of these *Lives* are dedicated to monks, in contrast to the *Lives* written in Byzantine Italy prior to the coming of the Arabs, in which the saint is often a local bishop. This difference corresponds to the new role that the monasteries began to play in the region, as *foci* of protection for the local inhabitants.⁸⁸

All of these texts are extremely rich in political information and descriptions of Arab-Byzantine relationships. I have emphasized elsewhere the importance to the local hagiographers of portraying the saints as local political leaders, who in contrast to the Byzantine political and military leaders sent from the capital, are more successful in protecting the local population.⁸⁹ Starting from the ninth century, Muslim Arabs represent the real menace in the local hagiography. In contrast, the Jews disappear from these texts almost entirely.⁹⁰ *A priori*, the Christian-Muslim conflict has taken over the place of the Christian-Jewish conflict. However, the two rivalries are not presented on the same level. The Christian-Jewish conflict is presented as an entirely internal Byzantine religious affair, and is used by the hagiographer to portray internal conflicts that disturb the Byzantine society. The saint who travels to Arab land encounters Muslims and Christians, but not Jews, who are totally absent from the *Lives* situated outside the Byzantine Empire.

The fact that Christian-Jewish rivalry was perceived by the hagiographers of Byzantine Italy as an internal affair is also manifested in the way the confrontation between the saint and the Jews is presented in the *Life of Nil of Rossano*. Nil confronts Jews on two occasions. In the first, a young Christian who has murdered a Jewish merchant is turned over by the Christian authorities to the Jewish community,

ed., Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Νείλου τοῦ Νεοῦ, (Badia di Grottaferrata, 1972). For all those Saints' Lives see G. Da Costa Louillet, "Saints de Sicile et d'Italie méridionale," *Byzantion* 29-30 (1960): 89-173, as well as the analysis of St. Efhymiadis, "Chrétien et Sarrasins en Italie méridionale et en Asie Mineure (IX^e-XI^e siècle)," in *Histoire et Culture dans l'Italie Byzantine*, eds., A. Jacob, J.-M. Martin and Gh. Noyé (Rome, 2006), 589-618; and Rotman, "Christian, Jews and Muslim," *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ A. Acconcia Longo, "I vescovi nell'agiografia italogreca: il contributo dell'agiografia alla storia delle diocesi italogreche," in A. Jacob, J.-M. Martin and Gh. Noyé, eds., *op. cit.*, 127-53; A. Pertusi, "Monaci e monasteri della Calabria bizantina," in *Calabria bizantina. Vita Religiosa e Strutture Amministrative. Atti del primo e secondo incontro di Studi Bizantini* (Reggio, 1974), 17-46.

⁸⁹ Rotman, "Christians, Jews," *op. cit.*

⁹⁰ The only exception is the *Life of Nil of Rossano*, in the following two notes.

which intends to crucify him. Nil manages to save his life by citing a theological regulation, according to which the life of one Christian equals the lives of seven Jews.⁹¹ In the second episode, Nil's healing powers and faith are confronted with those of the most famous Jewish physician of the time, Shabbetai Donnolo. In two episodes, Nil refuses Donnolo's medical help; in one case, he himself is sick. On both occasions, Nil is victorious over the Jewish scientific knowledge of Donnolo through his strong Christian faith in the power of God.⁹² Although absent from most of local hagiographies, the Jews are still dealt with from the religious polemic perspective.

The Muslims, on the other hand, are presented as complete outsiders, and the Christian-Muslim relationship is portrayed as it was perceived at the time—a political danger, and not a religious menace.⁹³ This is also manifested in the way the theme of conversion is dealt with. The conversion of Muslims to Christianity conducted by Elias the Younger in Arab territory is the only place where conversion is mentioned in the Greek hagiographic literature of southern Italy of this period. This can indeed serve a moral objective: the local saint is said not only to have been loyal to the Christian faith, but also to be the one who beats the enemy on its own territory. No other case of conversion, of a Jew, a Christian, or a Muslim is mentioned in this literature, in contrast to the place given to conversion by Jewish authors of this region.

In my examination of the literature written in a conflict area of the Byzantine Empire, I hope to have shown that the representation of the Jew and the Christian-Jewish conflict in the local hagiography does not change once a new religious rival appears in the ninth century. Although the new Christian-Muslim conflict occupies the entire attention of the local writers, this does not affect the way the Christian-Jewish conflict is perceived. Muslim Arabs are portrayed as political and religious rivals, and as complete outsiders. In contrast, the

⁹¹ Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Νείλου τοῦ Νεοῦ, op. cit., 81.

⁹² Ibid., 93, 98; For Shabbetai Donnolo: A. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo* (Ktav, 1976); A. Sharf, *Jews and other Minorities in Byzantium* (Ramat Gan, 1995), 160–77.

⁹³ Though there are a few references to good neighborliness, such as the bread that Nil receives from the Muslims in his escape: Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Νείλου τοῦ Νεοῦ, op. cit., 51–3.

Christian-Jewish conflict remains an internal religious conflict in the Christian-Byzantine perspective. This conflict can be resolved in only one way, by the conversion of the Jews, which will mark their total integration, in exactly the same way as the conversion of other heretics in the Empire. However, once the Christian population confronts a real threat, the conversion of the Jews is no longer of interest to the hagiographers.

BYZANTINE-JEWISH ETHNOGRAPHY:
A CONSIDERATION OF THE *SEFER YOSIPPON* IN LIGHT
OF GERSON COHEN'S "ESAU AS SYMBOL IN
EARLY MEDIEVAL THOUGHT"

Joshua Holo

I. INTRODUCTION

In his classic essay on the Jewish identification of Rome with the biblical figure of Esau, Gerson Cohen relies heavily on the Hebrew adaptation of Josephus known as the *Sefer Yosippon*.¹ Probably penned in Byzantine southern Italy of the mid-tenth century, the *Yosippon* figures prominently not only in the Byzantine-Jewish intellectual tradition but also in medieval Hebrew literature at large, on account of both its content and style.² The *Yosippon* chronicles the Second Temple period (for which the medieval Jewish readership had few, if any, sources that it considered reliable), and its rigor and readability made it the historiographical gold standard for Hebrew literature until the modern age.³ On the strength of these qualities, the *Yosippon* was copiously copied, and it attracted a number of later interpolations and accretions, including a Hebrew version of the Alexander romance, for example. In sum, the *Yosippon*, more than any other Hebrew work, situated the

¹ G. Cohen, "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought," in *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures*, (Philadelphia, 1991; repr. from *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altmann, [Cambridge, Mass., 1967], 19–48), 255–9.

² For a brief review of the scholarly discussion on the date of the *Yosippon*, see S. Bowman, "Dates in *Sefer Yosippon*," in *Pursuing the Text* (Sheffield, 1994), 353–9, and J. Reiner, "The Original Hebrew *Yosippon* in the Chronicle of Jerahmeel," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 60 (1969): 133–4. An earlier generation of summaries of the debate can be found in A. Neubauer, "Pseudo-Josephus, Joseph ben Gurion" and "Yerahmeel ben Shlomo," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 11 (1899): 355–64, 367–8. Most agree that the *Yosippon* was composed in Byzantine Southern Italy, as per D. Flusser, "The Author of the Book of Josiphon: His Personality and His Age" (Heb.), *Zion* 18 (1953): 116, reprinted in *Josippon: The Original Version MS Jerusalem 8° 41280 and Supplements*, ed. and intro. D. Flusser (Jerusalem, 1978).

³ S. Bowman, "Josephus in Byzantium," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, ed. L. Feldman and G. Hata (Detroit, 1987), 375–7; *idem*, "Sefer Josippon: History and Midrash," in *The Midrashic Imagination*, ed. M. Fishbane (Albany, 1993), 281.

Jewish experience in relation to the history of the Roman Empire and, by extension, the Christian world that claimed to be its heir.⁴

Conscious of this function, the *Yosippon's* author worked hard to integrate Josephus's tone of critical historiography into the prevailing Jewish ethnography of the Roman Empire.⁵ The rabbis of Late Antiquity had claimed that the Romans descended from Esau, or Edom, and that their rivalry with the descendants of Israel, or Jacob, stemmed from the eponymous twins' enduring grudge (despite the distinctly positive light shone on their relationship in Gen. 33 and Deut. 24). While adopting this conventional ethnography, the *Yosippon* couches it in historicizing narratives of Edomite migrations to Rome.⁶ It validates, in other words, the rabbis' ethnography of Rome by attending to Greco-Roman standards of historical proof.⁷

Behind this effort, as Cohen duly points out, the Jewish interest was more urgent than at first it may appear. Superficially, the Jewish association of Rome with Edom merely continued a longstanding tradition, according to which Jewish ethnic taxonomy connected contemporary peoples to those mentioned in the so-called "table of nations" in Genesis 10. Thus, by the Middle Ages Ashkenaz and Togarmah (Gen. 10:3) came to mean Germany and Turkey, respectively. But the specific ethnographic assignments had changed over time; Josephus, for example, associates Ashkenaz with the Reginians and Togarmah with the Phrygians.⁸ In the case of the *Yosippon*, two parallel ethnographies link the Romans simultaneously with the Biblical Kittim (kin to the Greeks) and the Edomites (or Idumeans, a Semitic people neighboring the Land of Israel to the south).⁹ The *Yosippon* acknowledges both genealogies for Rome but goes to great lengths to justify the Edomite one, and the deeper significance of this preference lies in the

⁴ Bowman, "Sefer Josippon," 286.

⁵ L. Feldman, "Josephus as an Apologist to the Greco-Roman World: His Portrait of Solomon," in *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. E. S. Fiorenza (Notre Dame, 1976), 91. Bowman, "Josephus in Byzantium," 376.

⁶ Cohen, "Esau as Symbol," 256; Bowman, "Sefer Josippon," 285; Flusser, "The Author of the Book of Josiphon," 121–26. See also related sections to David Flusser's introduction to his authoritative edition of the *Yosippon* text, *Sefer Josippon*, ed. D. Flusser, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1978), 2:140, 164, 171–6. All references to the *Sefer Josippon* are to this edition, unless otherwise noted.

⁷ Bowman, "Sefer Josippon," 285.

⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. W. Whiston in *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus* (Philadelphia, 1957), 1:6.

⁹ Cohen, "Esau as Symbol," 257; the Kittim appear in Gen. 10:4.

particular theological challenge posed by the Roman imperial conflict with the Jewish nation.¹⁰ In the wake of the First Revolt against Rome, which resulted in the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., the Jews searched for scriptural passages that might have prophesied (and hence made sense of) that cataclysm.¹¹ They came to understand their defeat by the Romans as an expression of the apocalyptic—not merely national—enmity between Jacob and Esau. Already the earliest stratum of the rabbinic canon invokes Psalms to admonish God to “remember the day of Jerusalem against the Edomites, O Lord.” On that day, “when they uproot its foundations, as ‘they said “Destroy it! Destroy it to its very foundation,”’” Israel will be redeemed.¹² In this and other texts, the Edomites, in their Roman guise, bookend the last stage of history: the Roman/Edomite savaging of Jerusalem initiated Israel’s Exile, and Rome’s own fall will herald the messianic age. In this way, the rabbinic ethnography of Rome-as-Esau is a cornerstone of Jewish eschatology.¹³

¹⁰ Cohen, “Esau as Symbol,” 259, calls it “flimsy.”

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 244.

¹² *Tosefta Ber.* 1:15, quoting Ps. 137:7.

¹³ *Sefer Josippon*, 1:91: “In those days, the Lord began to increase the fourth kingdom at the expense of the third kingdom; that is, the kingdom of the Romans moved against the kingdom of Greece and elevated the name of the Romans above all [other] kingdoms. This [i.e., the Roman Empire,] is the fourth beast that Daniel saw....” If late-antique rabbinic literature established the apocalyptic implications of Rome-as-Esau, then medieval literature enshrined the chronology of that messianic history, by assigning the Roman Empire to one of the beasts or horns of Daniel’s vision. As such, Rome’s identity as Esau not only defined the actors in the eschatological drama, but it also fit into a specific historical timetable, as defined by the rise and fall of the great empires. See Cohen, 257, *pace* Bowman, “*Sefer Josippon*,” 283, who does not see a contemporary polemic in the *Yosippon*, nor, *idem*, “*Josippon*,” 375, the traditional eschatology. Cf. *Sefer Josippon*, 2:183–5, acknowledging a certain religiosity in the author’s outlook, but relegating it to the background behind his fundamentally historiographical concerns.

It is true that the *Yosippon* does not engage either at length in the traditional mode of eschatological interpretation nor with the same zeal or urgency, as does, for example, its contemporary Byzantine-Hebrew composition, known as the “*Vision of Daniel*.” A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry* (New York, 1971), 101–2, 202, points out this apocalypticism in his translation of the “*Vision*,” which is steeped in the politics of the tenth-century Byzantine Empire and their apocalyptic implications: “But the Lord God will look upon the face of all the land and burn with fire from heaven the cities of Rome.... Then the Messiah will reign.” For the vision, see L. Ginzberg, *Genze Schechter (Genizah Studies in Memory of Dr. Solomon Schechter)*, 3 vols. (1928), 1: 313–23 and Y. Even-Shmuel, *Midreshe ge’ulah*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem, 1953), 232–52; analysis by S. Krauss, “Un nouveau texte pour l’histoire judéo-byzantine,” *Revue des Études Juives* 87 (1929): 1–27; partial trans. by J. Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire* (Athens, 1939), 6, 135–141. More recently: A. Sharf, “A Source for Byzantine Jewry under the Early

In a parallel development, the Church Fathers began to appropriate the identity of Israel for themselves, while casting the *Jews* as Edom.¹⁴ Upending the Jewish ethnography of Rome, the Church Fathers built on the Pauline tradition to invert the logic of genealogy altogether and to invoke a spiritual—as opposed to ethnic—criterion for the inheritance of the divine covenant.¹⁵ Tertullian, for example, calls the faithful to “the house of the God of *Jacob*—not of *Esau*, the former son, but of *Jacob*, the second; that is, of *our* people, whose mount is Christ.”¹⁶ In other words, the Fathers pointedly rejected Israel’s claim to a national or ethnic covenant with God, in favor of a claim based on faith, which in turn redefined the parties to it.¹⁷ On the strength of this interpretation, Christianity developed its signal supersessionist claim, namely, that Christians replaced the Jews as the True Israel. Originally, as Cohen describes it, this inversion meant little to the Jews. But when faced with the rise of Roman imperial Christianity, their political subjugation appeared to vindicate Christianity’s triumphalism.¹⁸ Now compounding the national conflict with the Roman Empire—already of messianic proportion—this Christian position raised the stakes for the Jews’ ethnography of Edom. Rome-as-Esau now served as an essentialist foil for the Jews’ own identity.

From this point of departure Cohen argues his central point, namely, the bifurcation of Jewish literature’s approach to Roman ethnography.

Macedonians,” *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 20 (1970): 302–18; idem, “The Vision of Daniel as a Source for the Jews of Byzantium,” *Bar-Ilan Annual* 4–5 (1967): 197–208 (Hebrew); L. Rydén, “The Date of the ‘Life of Andreas Salos,’” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 32, (1978), 127–55; S. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York, 1957) 3:174–206, 311–28.

¹⁴ E.g., Augustine, Sermon 72 on the New Testament, secs. 3–6, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, ed. P. Schaff (New York, 1888), vol. 6, pp. 470–2; or Jerome, Epist. 36, “Ad Damasum,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace (New York, 1893), vol. 6, p. 47.

¹⁵ E.g., Eph., 3:6. J. Neusner, “Israel and the Nations,” *CCAR Journal* 17/7 (June, 1970): 31–40, through his reading of Aphrahat, argues against the perception that Christianity attempted to “de-ethnicize” the religious covenant. He extensively cites Aphrahat’s position, summarized in his assertion that “the people Israel was rejected, and the peoples took their place.” That is, peoplehood still mattered in Christianity. Neusner’s interpretation of Aphrahat, however, misses the point of Christianity’s “de-ethnicization.” It is true that Aphrahat conceived of Christians as constituting a people (of peoples), but the point is that membership in this people was based on a credo and not a literal, genealogical lineage.

¹⁶ Tertullian, “An Answer to the Jews,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds., A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (New York, 1885), ch. 3, p. 154.

¹⁷ Cohen, “Esau as Symbol,” 251–3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 255.

On the one hand, Cohen correlates what he calls the Italian school to the purely national definition of Rome-as-Edom. Cohen's Italian school, basically the *Sefer Yosippon*, employs Edom to mean the city of Rome, its inhabitants, and the empire it spawned. Though acknowledging that the native population of Rome was Kittite, the *Yosippon* describes two Edomite migrations from Canaan, in the Patriarchal and Davidic periods respectively, which transformed the demography and hierarchy of the Italian peninsula.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the original text of the *Yosippon* remains silent about Christianity, leading Cohen to assert that for it, the "name of Edom had applied originally to Rome and [only] by extension to Christendom."²⁰ On the other hand, Cohen discerns a Babylonian school, comprising the bulk of "Babylonian, Spanish, and Provençal Jewish scholars," who identify Esau by theological, as opposed to national, criteria. Though conceding an Edomite ethnic overlay onto the native Roman population, as per the *Yosippon*, the Babylonian school emphatically "removed Christendom from an ethnic-political level to a strictly theological plane."²¹ Cohen points to, among others, Isaac Abravanel, the biblical exegete and leader of the generation expelled from Spain in 1492. Abravanel avers that, "from the point of view of religion and faith...it is appropriate to call the Christians 'Edomites' and the seed of Esau." In this "Babylonian" view, all Christians, be they Goths, Romans, or Semites, stemmed from the ideological stock of Esau.²²

Accepting for the moment Cohen's distinction between these two schools of medieval Jewish ethnography, his relatively neat characterization of the *Yosippon's* position nevertheless begs the question of its relevance to Christianity. Cohen acknowledges that the *Yosippon's* "ethnographic introduction was a tacit reply to the Christian polemic he heard round about him."²³ But he does not delve into the reasoning whereby that tacit polemic transferred Rome's Edomite identity to Christianity, because he believes that the *Yosippon* is not primarily concerned with undertaking that religious argument.²⁴ To be sure,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 256–7; *Sefer Josippon*, 2:10–11, 13, 82.

²⁰ Cohen, "Esau as Symbol," 260.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 257, 259–60.

²² On Is. 35, I. Abravanel, *Perush 'al nevi'im ahronim (Commentary on the Later Prophets)* (Pesaro, 1520; repr. Jerusalem, 1979), 172.

²³ Cohen, "Esau as Symbol," 258.

²⁴ S. Zeitlin, "The Origin of the Term Edom for Rome and the Roman Church," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 60 (1970): 262–3, makes a key case for an early Rabbinic

the *Yosippon* establishes the “factual” bona fides whereby the Roman Empire might be understood as ethnically Edomite, as Cohen argues, without direct reference to Christianity.²⁵ However, at least one story in the *Yosippon* seems to hint at a stronger religious polemic than Cohen perceives. The *Yosippon* satirizes Mary through the person of Paulina, a Roman lady unwittingly seduced by a man claiming to be the Egyptian god Anubis, based directly on Josephus’s *Antiquities*.²⁶ Somewhat more veiled is the *Yosippon*’s conflation of Rome’s wars against its two great North African enemies of different ages: the Carthaginians and the Vandals. Esau’s grandson, named Zepho, flees from Joseph, after which he “went to Africa, to Agneas, king of the Carthaginians; Agneas received him in great honor and appointed him as a general of his army.”²⁷ After a short narrative interlude, the story of Zepho picks up again, when “the Vandals, the troops of the king of Africa, began to come to the land of the Kittites [i.e., Rome,], to raid and plunder. Zepho always came with them, and the Kittites received him in great honor and gave him great gifts, on account of which the man became very rich.”²⁸ The invocation of the Vandals recalls—in admittedly garbled fashion—another Jewish tradition, according to which Christianity as a religion came about under Constantine, through the agency of the Germanic tribes in Europe.²⁹ By means of conflating

correlation between Edom and the Church—not just between Edom and the Roman Empire.

²⁵ Cohen, 257–8.

²⁶ *Sefer Josippon*, 1:270, n. 36, 2:55; Bowman, “Sefer Josippon,” 290. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Iudaicae*, IV, ed. B. Niese (Berlin, 1890), 18.65–80; idem, *Antiquitates*, 18.3.4. The preface and epilogue to the story only confirm its anti-Christian purpose. Both sections situate the Romans’ attempt to import their idolatrous abominations into Jerusalem during the rule of none other than Pilate.

²⁷ *Sefer Josippon*, 1:11 and notes, on the spelling of Aeneas.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:13.

²⁹ G. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition (Sefer ha-Qabbalah) by Abraham ibn Da’ud* (Philadelphia, 1967), xxxii–xxxiv, 252–3, citing Ibn Da’ud’s short “Chronicle of Rome,” in *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* (Mantua, 1514), catalogued as *Hibbure ha-kronografia shel ha-RABaD ha-rishon (Chronographical Writings of RABaD the Elder)* (Jerusalem, 1964), 21–4. This brief tract raises five distinct claims that are key in understanding the connection among Rome, the German tribes, Spain and Christianity. First, p. 23, that the Christian religion is a Constantinian/Nicaean construct (see below, n. 46). This much is shared by, among others, Maimonides and the Karaite al-Qirqisani, both cited by Cohen, *Book of Tradition*, xxxiii, n. 81. Second, pp. 23–4, that Christianity came to the eastern emperors through the influence of Arius, whose version of Christianity dominated the Germanic tribes in both the northern and southern Mediterranean. Third, that “the people of Uz [of Edomite stock], i.e., the Goths, entered Spain in three groups: Vandals, Alans, and Suevi.” Fourth, that they remained pagan

the two wars around the person of Zepho, the *Yosippon* connects the arrival of the Edomites with the arrival of Christianity. In this light, the Edomite ethnic argument in the *Yosippon* serves an anti-Christian polemical purpose, not so much tacitly as obliquely.

The *Yosippon's* argument from ethnicity sets up two subsequent, explicitly anti-Christian claims. First, Christianity, if also Edomite, shares Rome's essentially pagan character; second and more abstractly, Christianity, despite its protestations to the contrary, is an ethnically determined religion. The former proposition opens up an entire series of well-worn animadversions against Christianity as idolatrous.³⁰ The latter offers the double attraction of reasserting the Jews' ethnic claim to Jacob, or Israel, and denying Christianity's countervailing claim, which seeks to spiritualize *its* descent from the selfsame Jacob. This more ramified and developed polemic emerges, however, not in the original, tenth-century *Yosippon*, but in an interpolation to it, probably from eleventh- or twelfth-century southern Italy (a period of time that extends beyond that of Byzantine hegemony on the peninsula).³¹ Inspired by the *Toledot Yeshu* tradition, a genre of late-antique or early-medieval Hebrew screeds against Jesus and Christianity, the interpolator adapted those polemics to fit the *Yosippon*. As a result, the ethnic argument of the original text becomes an integral part of the religious polemic in the interpolation, which takes a genealogical tack parallel to the well-known, but dubious, Jewish legend of Jesus's being fathered by a wayward Roman soldier.³² As such, though obviously an

for some time; only later did they become Christian and marry into the Roman royal family, and only generations thereafter did Christianity spread in the Mediterranean. Fifth, that throughout the encounter between Rome and Christianity, the religion is termed the "Torah of Edom," connecting the Goths organically to the religion, even when they did not practice it.

³⁰ Cf. the association of Christianity with the Adonis cult, H. Newman, "The Death of Jesus in the *Toledot Yeshu* Literature," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 50/1 (1999): 77-9.

³¹ For possible dating, see *Sefer Josippon*, 2:57; for the textual variants of the interpolation, see *Sefer Josippon*, 1:439-42; 2:54-60, 360; originally edited by R. Eisler, *Jesous Basileus* (Heidelberg, 1930), and subsequently by I. Lévi, "Jésus, Caligula et Claude," *Revue des Études Juives* 91 (1931): 135-54, who locates its composition also in Southern Italy, p. 152; A. A. Neuman, "A Note on John the Baptist and Jesus in the *Josippon*," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23/2 (1950-1): 143-49. Mentioned, too, in J. S. Kennard, Jr., "Gleanings from the Slavonic Josephus Controversy," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 39/2 (1948): 169-70.

³² M. Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition* (New York, 1950), 36-9; in partial contrast, the claim that Mary was a prostitute seems to be genuine to the rabbis, B. Sanh. 106a.

ahistorical vituperation, this anti-Christian interpolation fleshes out the tacit or roundabout polemic in the *Yosippon*.³³ Moreover, though it may have been composed in southern Italy after the end of Byzantine control, the interpolation had an afterlife that may shed light on the Byzantine Jews' understanding of the Roman civilization in which they lived.³⁴

II. EDOM AS BOTH ROME AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE *YOSIPPON* AND ITS ANTI-CHRISTIAN INTERPOLATION

The original *Yosippon* text, as determined by David Flusser in his authoritative edition, begins with a primordial history of Rome which, perhaps unsurprisingly, reaches back to the Bible. The *Yosippon* offers Esau's grandson, named Zepho, as the link between Edom and the nascent city of Rome. On his way to Canaan to bury the bones of his father, Joseph encounters Zepho, and the two cousins rekindle the strife of their respective forebears. Zepho challenges Joseph, but Joseph captures him. Zepho eventually flees to Carthage, and thence he accompanies Aeneas to Italy, where he establishes himself as the god Janus-Saturnus, as the king of the Romans, and as the progenitor of Romulus.³⁵ Secondarily, the text represents Rome-as-Edom by means of another migration, set in motion by King David who "defeated Aram and Edom, with the result that Hadarezer and his sons fled and arrived at the land of the Kittites."³⁶ In both of these migrations, set very early in the chronology of the *Yosippon*, it is indeed an ethnic (or political-ethnic) conception of Roman history that connects the Edomites, that is, the descendants of Esau as per Genesis 36,

³³ D. Flusser, "Josippon, a Medieval Hebrew Version of Josephus," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, 395.

³⁴ Insofar as the "aim of the strange stories in chapter II is to make Sefo, the son of Elifaz, the son of Esau, the ancestor of the Romans," as per S. Sela, "The Genealogy of Sefo (Σωφορ) the Son of Elifaz," in *Genizah Research after Ninety Years: The Case of Judaeo-Arabic*, ed. J. Blau and S. Reif (Cambridge and New York, 1992), 139, Sela's claim that the *Yosippon*'s Roman history was Arabic-inspired does not detract from its Byzantine relevance. Byzantine Jewry had a profound stake in Roman history, and the *Yosippon*'s popularity in both the empire and Europe in general speaks to it, regardless of the origins of the story.

³⁵ *Sefer Josippon*, 1:9–11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:18. Hadarezer is a king of Aram in I Chron. 18–19, with Edom being associated with him only by implied alliance. The *Yosippon* therefore expands on the Biblical story, not only in the flight to Rome but also in the quasi-conflation of Aram and Edom. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates*, 8.199–24.

and the native Roman people of Kittite stock. Only indirect religious polemics emerge at this point in the story, namely, in the aforementioned story of Paulina, the conflation of the North African wars and in the deification of Zepho as the god Janus-Saturnus.³⁷ The picture becomes both richer and more complicated with the interpolation of the anti-Christian polemic, inserted in the story of Gaius Caesar's persecutions.³⁸

The anti-Christian interpolation attempts to thrust ethnicity onto that which actively denies any ethnic quality, namely, the Christian religion, and in so doing, this interpolation foregrounds and expands on the *Yosippon's* original, more narrowly ethnic argument. Building on the *Yosippon's* ethnic consciousness vis-à-vis Rome and Edom, the interpolation extends that relationship to Christianity as well. Whereas the original *Yosippon* text establishes Rome as Edom and vindicates the rabbinic eschatology, only the interpolation's definition of Christianity as Edom fully refutes—on Jewish, that is, ethnic terms—the essential Christian claim to being the True Israel.

The polemist begins with an unidentified movement, which we only later learn to be Christianity. This movement sinned, according to the interpolation, by violating monotheistic principles and indulging in idolatrous sycophancy to the Roman emperor. In the initial enumeration of these proto-Christians' religious aberrations, the interpolator appears to deviate from the strictly ethnic criterion for defining Esau as Rome; only as the account develops does it explicitly link the rise of Jesus's following to the Edomite people. And only then does it thereby leverage the ethnic identification of Rome-as-Esau for the consequent religious accusation of Christian polytheism and illegitimacy. The eventual application of the ethnic criterion not only justifies the religious argument, but also conveys a deeper message about the nature of religion itself. It disdains the very supranational underpinnings of Christian spirituality—i.e., its theological genealogy of covenant—and insists instead that Christianity is itself an ethnic religion. In this subtler fashion, it saps the methodological foundations that underlie Christianity's claim to being the True Israel.

Initially concerned only with deviation from orthodox Judaism, the interpolator invokes a Biblical moral principle, according to which one must follow God's law rather than the dictates of one's own tastes or

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:439–42, originally interpolated in 1:272, beginning line 16.

desires. At first undefined, a group of “rebels were moved, each to do his own bidding, to follow his own desires and to change his course.”³⁹ Subsequently, this movement turned to the Roman authorities, where it sought safe harbor from the Jewish ones. Having been hauled in before the Jewish “judges of the day, the agitators [then] went to the Roman governors in Judah and said to them: ‘Just because we rebelled against their [i.e., the Jews’] law and joined the law of Caesar, they want to kill us.’”⁴⁰ Thus far, even though this connection to Roman authority clearly links the anonymous insurgency to paganism, the text also leaves open the possibility that the agitators sought out the Romans, not out of any natural allegiance to Roman religion but simply out of political expediency. The rebels threw themselves at the mercy of the Roman court, and “when they took the oath ‘Long live Caesar!’ they were saved from the [Jewish] judge by Caesar’s governors.” Immediately, however, the landscape shifts. In their next move,

many of these villains of our people went out and led many away from God, and they went to Edom and they apostatized and went astray in vanity and directionlessness, even engaging in sorcery and making signs and wonders. Meanwhile, the sages of Israel could not rein them in, because they were protected by Gaius Caesar.⁴¹

Thus begins the as yet-unnamed agitators’ sincere complicity with the Roman Empire, a double (and later conflated) betrayal of religious heresy and political collaboration.⁴² At this point, however, the narrator recognizes that the rebels are Jews—villains, to be sure, but “villains of our people”—who took a decisive step when they went to Edom,

³⁹ *Sefer Josippon*, 1:439.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, n. 6: Flusser writes, of the word “Edom,” that “the author refers to ‘Edom’ in the Land of Israel, because he saw in Christianity the religion of Edom (i.e., Roman).” This differs, as does my translation, from the Fr. trans. of Lévi, “Jésus, Caligula et Claude,” 142, n. 1. Lévi argues that “both versions of this story are practically unintelligible—for which one need not blame the copyists: The author is a deplorable writer.... They practice this proselytism in Edom, that is to say, Rome, probably among the Jews.”

⁴² The sin of Christianity becomes that of emperor-worship, rather than the deification of Jesus, and the punishment of the Christians is meted out to the partisans of Gaius, not Jesus, *Sefer Josippon*, 1:441–2. This, in stark contrast to at least one strain of the *Toledot Yeshu* tradition, in which Jesus and his followers are seen to be in conflict with the Roman authorities (in addition to the Jewish ones), Z. Falk, “Jewish-Christian Relations, Past and Present,” *Immanuel* 8 (1978): 76–7.

meaning Idumea in the Land of Israel.⁴³ They not only cemented their collaboration with Rome in politics and religion, but more than that, they crossed over to Edom, with all the symbolic antagonism that such a “conversion” implies.

Still, nothing explicitly distinguishes the rebels as Christians or proto-Christians, and this initial ethnic identification as Jews serves a key purpose. It helps to draw a bright national distinction between the inchoate, internecine revolt and the new religion that it would become. As Israël Lévi points out, in his edition and translation of this tract, the term for “rebels” or “renegades” typically means proto-Christians in the *Toledot Yeshu* tradition.⁴⁴ But it seems that this text reaches for a more decisive definition of Christianity. Immediately after Gaius takes them under his wing, the rebels get a name and an identity that explicitly links Jesus and his movement with the people of Edom. Once co-opted by the imperial cult, “the agitators went to Nazareth-Edom, where they convinced many people.”⁴⁵ Lévi cannot explain the addition of the word “Nazareth,” but its purpose seems clear enough.⁴⁶ In this

⁴³ *Sefer Josippon*, 1:439, n. 6. E. Bammel, “Jesus as a Political Agent in a Version of the Josippon,” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. E. Bammel and C.F.D. Moule (Cambridge, 1984), 202–3, points out that the term פריצים, translated below as “renegades” or “rebels,” generally denotes the “breach between Judaism and the new movement. . . .” In other words, as Bammel states, “the case of Jesus is treated as a domestic affair in the Jewish references.” Cf. Lévi, “Jésus, Caligula et Claude,” 141, n. 1.

⁴⁴ Lévi, “Jésus, Caligula et Claude,” 141, n. 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 139, 142, n. 1, edits ms. Rothschild 24, with the textual variants from ms. Vatican 408. The reference to “Nazareth-Edom,” comes from the latter and is absent in the former. Flusser gives the variants in an appendix (see above, n. 31), only generally reporting on the page that this first part of the story belongs to both mss., as well as to the Kaufman mss; see *Sefer Josippon*, 2:6. The subsequent reference to “Nazareth, the Edomite city” (see below, n. 53), occurs in both the Vatican and Rothschild mss.

⁴⁶ Lévi, “Jésus, Caligula et Claude,” 142, n. 1, 148, n. 2. The mention of “Nazareth-Edom” seems to come from an existing tradition in the *Toledot Yeshu* genre, though its demographic argument and the context of genealogy raise it to a different level in the *Yosippon*. Bammel, “Jesus as Political Agent,” 204, n. 47, points out that there is a similar version, in which the idolatrous activity takes place in the city of Ai. Bammel cites the version of Huldreich, *Sepher Toledhoth Yeshua Hannaceri*, (Leiden, 1705), 122. In the case of Ai, as preserved by Huldreich, S. Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach Jüdischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1902), 159–60, argues that the city’s name, יא, is actually an abbreviation for the Hebrew יאיר, meaning the “city” *par excellence*, i.e., Rome. Furthermore, Jesus at one point states that “I am, now, from Edom.” Rome, in other versions of the *Toledot Yeshu* as compiled by Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, 47, 82, refers to the destination for those apostles who spread the word of the new religion and not, precisely, to the city where it takes its formative steps. Eng. summary and trans. by Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition*, 153. There is one case, Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, 121, in which Helena, Constantine’s mother, discovers that Jesus’s resurrection is a farce;

one sentence, the report weds the inhabitants of Nazareth (“Nazarene” is the medieval Hebrew term for Christian) with Edom.⁴⁷ Moving from Israel to Edom in this way, the story accounts for Christianity’s historically Jewish roots, while it also explains how the rebellion evolved into the familiar but distinct religion of Christianity by grafting onto the a local, pagan people, namely, the Edomites.⁴⁸ The demography has shifted: just as Kittite Rome became Edomite by virtue of an infusion of Edomite immigrants, so too, proto-Christianity—originally a Jewish heresy—becomes ethnically Edomite (hence Roman) idolatry.⁴⁹

Either purposely misrepresenting Christian history or bungling it out of ignorance, the story next introduces Jesus as something like an apostle. Having gained momentum in Nazareth-Edom,

Jesus and his disciples went to Gaius Caesar and said to him: “A messenger of God has come, His son who was prophesied long ago. He told them [i.e., the Jews of Palestine] to accept your [i.e., Gaius’s] commandments and to pronounce your name divine, but they wouldn’t listen to him. Rather, they pressured him [i.e., the messenger,] and persecuted him, intending to kill him.”⁵⁰

Having already laid the groundwork for an ethnic division between Christians, i.e., Nazarene-Edomites, and Palestinian Jews, the interpolator now clarifies their ideological differences as well, fundamentally based on their irreconcilable orientations in divine law.

In a complicated denouement marked by the accession of the more favorable Emperor Claudius, the Jews of Palestine exact their revenge from the rebels, and in so doing they revisit the ethnic problem. The punishment does not proceed smoothly at first, because errant Jews who had rebelled against the Sanhedrin remain essentially Jewish, and as such, they might be subject to a different standard than that which applies to the ethnically Edomite Christians. Judas Iscariot, here cast as

in reaction, she “was angry at the faction of Jesus, and she expelled three of them to Mt. Se’ir, three (or thirteen) to Rome, and the rest dispersed among the nations...” The implication here is that Christianity is a Roman religion, the fruit of a very late (i.e., fourth-century) misunderstanding and resulting in a false religion associated with both Rome and Edom.

⁴⁷ See below, n. 68.

⁴⁸ See the role of Idumean priests as described by Cohen, “Esau as Symbol,” 260, n. 95.

⁴⁹ Bammel, “Jesus as Political Agent,” 209.

⁵⁰ *Sefer Josippon*, 439, l. 10; Jesus is literally *Shevy* (יָשׁוּ), which is *Yeshu* (יֵשׁוּ), or Jesus, with a transposed letter *yod* (י).

the hero, “arose before the Sanhedrin at the command of the emperor, because the emperor said that they ought to determine the sentence on the people who had provoked Gaius Caesar against him.”⁵¹ Intending to hang the rebels, the Sanhedrin proceeds with the executions “at the command of the emperor, but not in accord with the wishes of all the people, who said that those who had been members of their community might return in repentance, for these people only offended in their own internal battles.”⁵² For these people, the possibility of repentance—on the principal that a Jew is always a Jew, even if errant—preempted the death penalty. Nevertheless, the leaders and “the majority of the people were pleased with [the rebels’] deaths, because they had sought to incite the Romans to war against them.” Then, as if to clarify the ethnic distinction between these rebellious Jews and the Christians, the story ends by returning to Nazareth-Edom:

Now many had followed them [i.e., the Christians,] in secret. Nevertheless, they [i.e., the Sanhedrin,] killed many of them from Nazareth, the Edomite city, by stoning them. Admittedly, they could not exterminate them, because they [i.e., the Christians] were acting in secret—for who can search out the private intentions of man except the Searcher of Hearts and Discerner of Intentions, called the Lord of Hosts?⁵³

In sum, the interpolator recognizes the limitations of Jewish authority over early Christianity, and he attempts to explain why the Sanhedrin failed to extirpate it entirely. The story closes with the lament that this “evil waxed ever stronger.” And with that phrase, the interpolation leaves us with the sense of an etiological tale that explains Christianity as an Edomite-Roman phenomenon, beyond the reaches of Jewish communal and religious authority.

The interpolation’s real power may lie, however, beyond the dual claim that Christianity is both theologically idolatrous and ethnically Edomite. At a deeper level, it validates the *Yosippon*’s ethnic sensibility, as described by Cohen, and in so doing it refutes Christianity’s underlying method of covenantal exegesis, which ultimately dismisses

⁵¹ Lit. “against *me*,” due to the confusion of persons, a common phenomenon in Hebrew indirect speech. Lévi, “Jésus, Caligula et Claude,” 141, 147, n. 3, reports “at the order of King Herod.”

⁵² Lévi, “Jésus, Caligula et Claude,” 141, 148, puts the act of repenting in the past tense, whereas *Sefer Yosippon*, 1:441, in the future or conditional. So, too, Lévi does not report the last clause, “for these people only offended in their own internal battles.”

⁵³ *Sefer Yosippon*, 1:441; for the reference to “Nazareth, the city of Edom,” see above, n. 45.

the value of ethnic lineage.⁵⁴ The interpolator is interested not only in the fact that both Rome and Christianity are Edomite but, more than that, in the implication that Christianity, no less than Rome, is pagan *because* it is Edomite. The polemist recognizes that Christianity attempted not to offer an ethnic counterclaim but rather to obviate the question of ethnicity altogether. In response, this story reasserts the principle of a nationally-specific covenant, a theological claim that simultaneously challenges Christianity and bolsters Judaism.⁵⁵

The original *Yosippon* text already follows this tack, by refusing to engage with the category of religion. As Cohen puts it, the author of the *Yosippon* “will have nothing to do with supernatural explanations, even Jewish ones.... He prefers an ethnological explanation, by going, after the fashion of the ancients, to a people’s origins.”⁵⁶ In its implicit apologia for Judaism’s continuity as the literal, genealogical heir to Jacob, the original *Yosippon* sidesteps the direct challenge of the Church triumphant; it does not address Christianity’s pointedly spiritual, non-ethnic, claim. The *Yosippon* puts forth only an oblique polemic, by insisting on the Edomite origins of Rome, and leaving the readers to draw their own conclusions.⁵⁷ It is only the anti-Christian interpolation that makes this tacit polemic explicit, by presuming to tell the national history, not of a national body, such as Rome, but of a religious one, namely, Christianity. But this deeper methodological argument, which claims national determinism in matters of religion, requires the context of the original *Yosippon*. Situated within it, the interpolation leverages the original text’s preference for ethnic history in general, in order to apply it to Christianity and thereby to undermine its foundational, supranational claims. Even more than Cohen would have it, this expansion of the *Yosippon*, though content to degrade Roman Christianity as paganism, more importantly insists that Christians were existentially—genetically—pagan, just as the Jews were, analogously, Israel.

⁵⁴ S. Mason, “Paul, Classical Anti-Jewish Polemic, and the Letter to the Romans,” in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, N.S. vol. 4, ed. J. Neusner (Atlanta, 1993), 141–81.

⁵⁵ *Sefer Yosippon*, 2:180.

⁵⁶ Cohen, “Esau as Symbol,” 257.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 257–8.

III. SITUATING THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN INTERPOLATION IN BYZANTINE JEWISH LITERATURE

The committed ethnic worldview of the *Yosippon* and its anti-Christian interpolation comes from two sources. First, Judaism itself has, since its origins, understood its religion and nationhood to be co-phenomenal. Second, by the tenth century the Jews of the Roman Empire had long suffered a political and theological assault on their nationhood. Imperial Christianity evolved partially in relation, and staked a claim, to the conceptual and actual place of the Jews in the world. Christian imperial policy eroded the national status that Roman Jewry had enjoyed during the pagan empire, just as Christian supersessionist theology hoped to render the Jews' ethnicity moot, in their competing claims to Jacob and the patriarchal covenant. To all appearances, both the core *Yosippon* text and its anti-Christian interpolation responded to this challenge: in the first case, through a concerted attempt to validate ethnicity as a principle for religious heredity and national status and, in the second case, through the sharpening of that principle into a rhetorical attack. Nevertheless, the *Yosippon* stands virtually alone in this fight in Byzantine Hebrew literature. Byzantine Hebrew authors from the tenth to twelfth centuries did not systematically take up ethnicity as a principle of either self-definition or polemics. Despite being the direct heir to the political and religious conflict between imperial Christianity and Judaism, the Jews of medieval Byzantium casually blurred the Edomite identity of the Roman Empire and that of Christianity, with only a broad sense of unevenly applied distinctions between them.

The historical condition of Byzantine Jewry would seem to encourage the ethnological orientation that both uniquely shapes the *Yosippon* and evolves with it. In his article titled "The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion," Daniel Boyarin illustrates the imposition of the status of religion, meaning belief or faith system, on the Jews. Christianity, an explicitly supranational, spiritual system, projected its own primary category of religion onto Judaism, with little or no regard for the Jews' more complex self-understanding as a nation charged with fulfilling a divine covenant founded in law.⁵⁸ The category of religion blinded Christian

⁵⁸ D. Boyarin, "The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion," *Representations* 85 (2004): 21.

thinkers to natively Jewish categories of ethnos, law, etc., permitting theologians to counterpoise Judaism and Christianity as antipodes on the axis of religion.⁵⁹ At least in part, Christianity could not afford to engage with the Jewish categories; so much Jewish nationalism and legalism only muddied the purely faith-based dichotomy—a dichotomy that formed Christian identity and, ultimately, triumphalism. This comparative-religious blueprint helped to define heresy in relation to Judaism, especially in light of Judaizing heretics who needed to be contained.⁶⁰ To this end, the categorization of heresy with Judaism *qua* religion mitigated the Jews' historical rights to autonomy, while allowing the Church to exercise authority over them.⁶¹ This position ultimately stimulated the dismantling of the Jewish national infrastructure, though the Jews struggled to keep it.

The Codes of Theodosius and Justinian trace the give-and-take between the imperial authorities and the Jewish representatives, as both sides jockeyed to situate the Jews in the newly Christian empire. The Jews dug in to protect their national status through two signal institutions, namely, the patriarchate, which functioned as their official representation to the empire, and their exemption from the financially burdensome city councils.⁶² These two institutions therefore became the main points of contention, and the legal establishment under both

⁵⁹ A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, 1987), 78. Linder considers, pp. 68–71, this categorization of Judaism as a religion to be a source of tolerance, despite, for example, the restrictions on the sphere of legal activity, p. 77. A. Rabello, “La première loi de Théodose II, C.Th.XVI, 8, 18, et la fête de Pourim,” *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 55 (1977): 546, 553, 555, and idem, “Jewish and Roman Jurisdiction,” in *An Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law*, ed. N. S. Hecht, et al. (Oxford, 1996), 153–4, presents a less positive picture of the relationship between Christian imperial jurisprudence and Jewish-Christian tensions. See also, idem, “Civil Jewish Jurisdiction in the Days of Emperor Justinian (527–565),” *Israel Law Review* 33 (1999): 51–66. All of these articles are reprinted in A. Rabello, *The Jews in the Roman Empire: Legal Problems, from Herod to Justinian* (Aldershot, 2000). See also, A. Rabello, *Giustiniano, ebrei e samaritani*, 2 vols. (Milan, 1987).

⁶⁰ Boyarin, “The Christian Invention of Judaism,” 25, 27, 29; Council of Nicaea, Synodal Letter, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 14, pp. 54, 151, etc.; A. Rabello, “L’observance des fêtes juives dans l’Empire romain,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der Neuren Forschung*, II, 21, 2, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin and New York, 1984; repr. in Rabello, *The Jews in the Roman Empire*, sec. 8), 1309–11, with even more aggressive intentions, as imputed to the Roman emperors by Saul Lieberman.

⁶¹ See, too, the social and ideological arguments in the Byzantine polemical tradition, S. Krauss, *The Jewish-Christian Controversy*, ed. and rev. W. Horbury (Tübingen, 1995), 61–6.

⁶² Linder, *The Jews*, 75.

Theodosius and Justinian took decisive steps to forestall the Jews' efforts.⁶³ In the reign of Theodosius, the Patriarchate was abolished, and in the reign of Justinian, if not earlier, their exemption from the city councils was likewise done away with.⁶⁴ Additionally, Justinian famously intervened in the internal Jewish matter of the reading of the Torah in synagogue.⁶⁵ Though they definitively lost ground in this political forum, the Jews never relinquished their identity in their own literature, nor did they shy away from the polemical implications that were built into their claim to be Israel. Boyarin illustrates how the rabbis of Late Antiquity adopted a heightened sense of national identity and a concomitant refusal of religion, while early Byzantine Jewish liturgical poetry enshrined the polemical element, as when Yannai lambastes Rome as the "one who loves blood [*dam*], hence its name is 'Edom.'"⁶⁶

Ultimately however, both the contours of Christianity's imperial position and the Jewish response took shape in the early Byzantine Empire; by the tenth century, the Jews' condition no longer hinged directly on this argument. Though it may not be surprising that the *Yosippon's* ethnic sensibility should still have currency among Jews, it is not entirely clear what purpose it served in Byzantine southern Italy of the tenth century. Indeed, after the close of the rabbinic corpus, in roughly the sixth century, only the *Yosippon*, which updates the rabbis' homilies with an historicizing account of events, systematically demonstrates Rome's literal Edomite roots.⁶⁷ Between the sixth and

⁶³ The imperial codes are no less concerned with the conversion of slaves to Judaism, intermarriage, and the presence of Jews in the civil and military services. As far as we can tell, the Jews took only semi-official stances against these limitations, though they appear to have breached them whenever they felt they could get away with it. See Linder, *The Jews*, 83, 272–3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 267–72, 320, describes the demotion, in 415, of Gamliel VI, the Patriarch, in his official standing before the Roman Empire, and subsequent re-routing of the crown tax from the patriarchal coffers to the empire.

⁶⁵ Krauss, *The Jewish-Christian Controversy*, 62.

⁶⁶ Boyarin, "The Christian Invention of Judaism," 44–8; Z. M. Rabinowitz, ed., *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai* (Jerusalem, 1985), 45–7, 198 (Hebrew). Rabinowitz, p. 52, estimates the period of Yannai to be in the sixth century. For an overview of Italian poets in the Middle Ages, from Byzantine territory and beyond, see L. J. Weinberger, *Jewish Hymnography* (London, 1998), 141–55. The preference in Italy and Byzantium, *Ibid.*, ch. 4, even when engaging in sharp anti-Christian polemics, seems to be to use the language of idolatry, without a strong or explicit link to Edom.

⁶⁷ *Sefer Yosippon*, 2:111; Flusser even emphasizes, *Sefer Yosippon*, 2:24, the cultural engagement of the *Yosippon* with the surrounding Christian culture, attributing the link between Zepho and Kittim to a non-Jewish source.

tenth century, “Edom” is difficult to trace in Byzantine Hebrew literature altogether, not least of all because of a relative dearth of sources. The Hebrew catalogue of the “Kings of Rome,” which lists Nicephoras Phocas as having reigned, by the time of the writing, for four years (meaning 967), distinguishes between Romans and Greeks, and places the Emperor Decius (r. 249–51) as the “first of the Christians” (literally, “Nazarenes”).⁶⁸ Subsequent to the *Yosippon*, authors refer to both the Byzantine state and the Christian religion with the term “Edom,” but they also have a more specifically geopolitical vocabulary at their disposal.⁶⁹ At all times, the distinctions between the terms are not perfectly clear, paying no particular heed to the careful ethnography of the *Yosippon*. Christians might be referred to as “Edomites” or “uncircumcised,” while these and similar terms may refer either to a person’s religious or national identity.⁷⁰ At the same time, some Hebrew authors narrow their semantic field to political or ethnic references with the Latin cognate “*Romi*” or “*Romania*,” though they too might just as easily use “Edom”; more specific references to “Constantinople,” “Macedonia,” or “*Yavan*,” meaning Greece, also occur.⁷¹ Shabbetai Donnolo (b. 913), a doctor and exegete from Oria, in Byzantine southern Italy,

⁶⁸ A. Neubauer, ed., *Medieval Jewish Chronicles and Chronological Notes* (Oxford 1887), 185–6.

⁶⁹ Part of the political reading of the Byzantine Empire as Edom was the fact that Christianity was one of its essential characteristics. For the Middle Ages, therefore, to separate them was necessarily to distinguish where there was not necessarily a difference. However, Elijah Capsali, the rabbinic leader of sixteenth-century Cretan Jewry, describes the decisive fall of the Byzantine Empire to the Turks, referring to the empire as Edom. In that particular context, he definitively distinguishes between Edom-as-Rome and Edom-as-Christianity, because his topic cannot be interpreted as the fall of Christianity, which he knew around him very well. He comments on Lamentations 4:21, an almost gleeful concession to the pyrrhic victory of Edom over the Israelites: “Rejoice and be glad, O Daughter of Edom, you who live in the land of Uz. But to you also the cup will be passed; you will be drunk and stripped naked.” Quoting the Targum, an Aramaic interpretive translation of the Bible that refers to the ironic destruction of “Constantinople, the evil city of Edom,” Capsali writes in his *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, ed. A. Shmuelevitz, et al., 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1975–83), 1:80, that “precisely according to these words and this vision did God bring upon them: nothing in their land fell [physically], yet it was ultimately split: rather, the accursed, bitter waters flowed and her belly distended.”

⁷⁰ “Uncircumcised” used religiously: Jacob b. Reuben, *Sefer ha-’osher*, quoted by Z. Ankori *Karaites in Byzantium* (New York, 1957), 415, n. 163; used culturally to mean Christian, as opposed to Muslim: TS 20.45, lines 24–5, ed. by J. Mann, *Texts*, 1:49, l. 25; as “gentile”: Jacob b. Reuben in Ankori, *Karaites*, 180, n. 43.

⁷¹ “Romaniya”: J. Mann, “The Messianic Movements during the First Crusades,” *Hatequfah* 23 (1924): 258; “*Romi*” in the “Vision of Daniel,” as ed. by Even-Shmuel, *Midreshe ge’ulah*, 252, l. 38, perhaps Rome, the city, and l. 50, perhaps Rome, the

refers to his fate “in the lands under the Roman Empire,” expressed with the term *romi*.⁷² The so-called “Schechter Document,” from a Jewish Khazar living in tenth-century Constantinople, correlates geopolitics to religion, as the “Greek” or “Macedonian” empire is synonymous with Christianity.⁷³

Edom, in similar fashion, appears in the eleventh and subsequent centuries to mean both the empire and Christianity. The eleventh-century *Chronicle of Ahima'az* recounts the fantastic adventures of a Jewish family in Byzantine Italy, spanning the ninth to the eleventh centuries. One of the family's protagonists, Paltiel, leaves Italy with the Muslim conqueror al-Mu'izz, in whose service he receives an ambassador from Constantinople. In order to impress the Greek emissary, Paltiel purposely breaks a costly dish,

and before all the assembled there, he laughed and said to the Greek, “Why are you so shocked? In your amazement you got up out of your seat!” The Greek emissary answered him, “Because I witnessed a great

empire. Analyzed also by Sharf, “The Vision of Daniel as a source for the History of Byzantine Jews,” 197–208.

⁷² Sh. Donnolo, *Sefer hakhmoni [Il commento di Sabbetai Donnolo sul libro della creazione]*, ed. D. Castelli (Florence, 1880), in *Sefer yesirah* (Jerusalem, 1965), 123. Donnolo goes on to distinguish between Greek and Macedonian, meaning ancient Greek and contemporary Byzantine, in relation to their scientific traditions.

⁷³ N. Golb and O. Pritzak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, 1982), 131, 133. In one instance, the author describes a battle between the Khazars and the Byzantine forces of Romanus Lecapenus, in which “the Macedonians were victorious by virtue of fire,” *Ibid.*, 118–19, ll. 11–12. But when Christians and Muslims hope to dislodge Judaism from the Khazar court, the Jewish Khazar chieftain asks, “Why multiply words? Let there come (here) some sages of Israel, some sages of Greece, and some sages of Arabia; and let them tell, each one of them, before us and before you, the deed of [his] Lord....’ They did so; Macedonia sent [its sages, and also] the kings of Arabia; and the sages of Israel volunteered to come....” Macedonia is preserved as [Ma]qe[d]on. *Ibid.*, 108–9.

Among Palestinian Karaites, Daniel al-Qumisi (probably early tenth-century), ed. J. Mann “A Tract by an Early Karaite Settler in Jerusalem,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* N.S. 12 (1921–2): 285, makes a proto-Zionist call to the Land of Israel, with historical reference to the political vagaries of Exile, beginning with “the kingdom of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Magians,” under whom the Rabbanites exerted authority over the oppressed Karaites, until the Muslims changed the landscape. Sahl b. Masliah, according to Nemoj's translation (see end of note) casts the kingdoms as paradigms of abomination: “They twice demolished my city/They twice burned my Temple/They slew my sons, did Babylon's lion/Media, Persia the evildoer/Greece, Macedon the malefactor/Ishmael, and Edom the witless.” In the edition by S. Pinsker, *Likkute kadmoniyot* (Vienna, 1860), 31, he treats Greece and Edom as lacunae. Trans. of both Daniel and Sahl, and filling in of the lacunae by L. Nemoj, *Karaite Anthology* (New Haven, 1952), 38, 113, 349, n. 1.

pity; the broken jar and bowl are priceless and irreplaceable.” R. Paltiel then asked, regarding the King of the Edomites, whether they used gold or vessels of precious stone, to which the Macedonian emissary responded “with gold vessels.”⁷⁴

With this dense variety of adjectives for “Byzantine,” including “Edomite,” the author implies Christian, in contradistinction to the Muslim host, but he also means the Byzantine polity. As one of the *Chronicle’s* editors and translators, Marcus Salzman, points out, the *Chronicle* “freely employs the words Roman, Greek, and Macedonian as equivalents of Byzantine,” in addition to Edom.⁷⁵ After all, Byzantium itself embodied both the Roman state and the Christian religion.

Meanwhile, documents from the Cairo Genizah, Byzantine and otherwise, reveal a similarly vague understanding of the relationship between Edom and the Roman Empire. In his letters, the mid-eleventh-century Byzantine Karaite Tobias b. Moses refers to the Jewish “communities of the land of Edom,” meaning the Byzantine Empire, which he elsewhere in the same letter refers to as “my native land.”⁷⁶ Twelfth-century liturgical poets in Greece occasionally invoke the term “Edom” or its metonym, “Se‘ir,” as does, for example Jacob b. Jacob Qalai.⁷⁷ Meshullam b. Kalonymos, the scion of the Italian Kalonymid clan, transplanted to Germany and active in the second half of the tenth century, wrote a Hebrew letter to the Jews of Constantinople. Meshullam addresses them as the “dispersed community of Exile, expelled from the Holy City, sold off by the Greeks out of their territory. But the power of Edom, the ‘fourth kingdom’ will slacken from the kingdoms of the earth.”⁷⁸ In brief, Hebrew authors made use of a variety of terms

⁷⁴ M. Salzman, *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz* (New York, 1924), 18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 89, n. 4; Salzman also compares this overlap to the Khazar document.

⁷⁶ Z. Ankori, “Correspondence of Tobias ben Moses,” in *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought: Presented in Honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron*, ed. J. Blau, et al. (New York, 1959), 37, ll. 12–13; 38, l. 24.

⁷⁷ L. J. Weinberger, *Early Synagogue Poets in the Balkans* (Cincinnati, 1988), 81, l. 3. Se‘ir calls on Gen. 36:8 and *passim*: “Esau settled at Mt. Se‘ir; Esau being Edom.” In the same collection, 155, ll. 1–4, Isaac b. Judah, another twelfth-century poet, points out how Jews, personified in Isaac and Jacob, have suffered at the hands of their respective brothers. In both cases, Jacob calls on both the theme of oppression at the hands of Ishmael and Esau, respectively, but also, by virtue of their being brothers, the shared religious history of the three.

⁷⁸ A. Scheiber, “The Letter of Meshullam ben Kalonymos ben Moshe the Elder to Constantinople regarding the Karaites,” *Studies in Jewish History Presented to Professor Raphael Mahler on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Sh. Yeivin (Tel-Aviv, 1974), 21.

to refer to Rome, with "Edom" perhaps being the most flexible, ranging from a political and religious designation for Christian Rome, to the traditional eschatology of Rome as Daniel's fourth kingdom.⁷⁹

Only a very slim tradition has survived in which Byzantine thinkers spell out the connection between Rome and Edom, and even fewer of them follow the *Yosippon's* interpolation in extending that link to Christianity.⁸⁰ In the twelfth century, Jacob b. Reuben, a Byzantine Karaite, connects Edom to Rome with rare explicitness. He interprets Edom, as the figure appears in Obadiah, as the one "to whom the children of Esau have come and crowned him over them as the king of Greece."⁸¹ In this, he may be following a parallel tradition found in the "Midrash Yelamdenu," preserved already in the Cairo Genizah (tenth to twelfth centuries). This midrash explains Genesis 36:6, in which Esau "went to another land, on account of Jacob his brother," by defining the land to which he went as "the great kingdom of Rome, which Zepho son of Eliphaz, son of Esau, built."⁸² Cohen strenuously argues that this element in the "Yelamdenu" tradition comes from the *Yosippon*, and indeed it may.⁸³ If so, it points to a stream, perhaps

⁷⁹ Further confusing the issue is any potential difference between casual as opposed to literary usage. S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 7 vols. (Berkeley, 1967-93), 1:54, translates "Edom" as "Europe." Another letter, which Goitein mentions in the same paragraph, refers to the "Rum and Ifranji Jews," whom Goitein translates as "Byzantine" and "West European," respectively, because of the apparent juxtaposition of the two terms, implying one is eastern and the other western.

⁸⁰ Generic anti-Christian writings, as that of the eleventh-century Byzantine Jew Benjamin b. Samuel, simply laid out the theological charge of idolatry or paganism: L. J. Weinberger, "Jewish Scholars and Scholarship in Byzantium," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91 (1971): 143.

⁸¹ Ankori, "Correspondence of Tobias b. Moses," 5, n. 13, translates this and other passages in which Jacob associates Edom with the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople being its metonym. When Ez.35:2 refers to Mt. Se'ir, the burial place of Esau and the location of the Biblical Edomites, or Idumeans, Jacob says, "what they shall do to Constantinople and her people; and this is the meaning of '[Son of man, set thy face] against Mount Se'ir.'" See also Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium: 1204-1453* (Tuscaloosa, 1985), 179. One wonders if there is, in Jacob's mind, a difference between Constantinople, by definition Christian Rome, and Italian Rome, which calls on pre-Christian heritage, as well as Christian.

⁸² *Batei midrashot*, ed. A. Y. Wertheimer, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1954), 1:160.

⁸³ J. Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati, 1940), Heb. sec. 327, n. 442, argues that this "Yelamdenu" tradition predates the *Yosippon*, on account of the discrepancies. Cohen, "Esau as Symbol," 268-9, n. 88, believes those discrepancies to come from a garbling of the text. See also Wertheimer's claim in *Batei midrashot*, 1:139, that the origins are hard to discern, though it clearly goes back at least as early as the eleventh century. It was also preserved in Samuel

taken for granted, in Byzantine-Jewish thinking that vindicated the ethnographic definition of Rome as Esau. Tobias b. Eliezer, a leading Byzantine biblical exegete of the eleventh century, makes another connection between Edom and Christianity. He interprets, in the struggle between Esau and Jacob, the difference between Sabbath observance on Sunday and Saturday, respectively.⁸⁴ Still, the overall impression is one of a generic, unsystematic but thoroughgoing sense of Edom as both Rome and Christianity, widely accepted by Byzantine authors but not fully parsed out. Only in the traces of the *Yosippon* itself, together with those of its anti-Christian interpolation, do we find the continuation of the focused ethnological polemic in Byzantine Hebrew literature.

IV. CONCLUSION: TRACES OF THE YOSIPPON'S POLEMIC IN BYZANTIUM

In general, therefore, the vitality of the ethnographic polemic in Byzantium, as outlined by Gerson Cohen, is equivocal. If the connection among Edom, Christianity, and Rome certainly existed, very few texts claimed to lay out an authoritative, factual account of the terms of that connection, until the *Yosippon* and the anti-Christian addition to it.⁸⁵ The *Yosippon*, more or less alone in Byzantine Hebrew literature, produced a specific methodological polemic that inverted the analogous efforts of the Church to pigeonhole Judaism as a religion.⁸⁶ In the first place, it detailed the Edomite heritage of Rome, and in the second place, it indirectly painted Christianity with the same ethnographic brush, through the story of Paulina. The later anti-Christian interpolation then made the *Yosippon's* oblique or tacit anti-Christian polemic

b. Nissim Masnut, *Bereshit Zuta*, ed. M. Cohen (Jerusalem, 1962), 281, compiled in Aleppo, in the thirteenth century. Masnut seems to support Cohen's claim, when he openly points out that he heard that "we have found in secular books that Zepho son of Eliphaz, son of Esau, built the great city of Rome," apparently attributing his tradition to the *Yosippon*. For an English compilation see L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia, 1910–38), 2:159–69, 5:372–3, nn. 424–5.

⁸⁴ N. R. M. de Lange, "Hellenism and Hebraism Reconsidered: The Poetics of Cultural Influence and Exchange," *Poetics Today* 19 (1998): 139.

⁸⁵ *Sefer Yosippon*, 2:53, 56; Flusser places the full version, including the anti-Christian polemic, at the beginning of what he categorizes as group A, the closest textual generation to the original.

⁸⁶ Flusser, "Yosippon, a Medieval Hebrew Version of Josephus," 389: "The first readers of the book of *Yosippon* were Byzantine Jews."

explicit. Though this second, more direct stage of argumentation was not part of the original *Yosippon*, it had an afterlife in the textual tradition of the *Yosippon* that flourished in Byzantine territory. Moreover, despite the fact that this line of ethnographic argumentation did not come to dominate Byzantine Hebrew literature, the interpolation provides a lens through which we might reinterpret even the core text of the *Yosippon*.

A few clues to the afterlife of the ethnographical polemic hail from the foundational, fourteenth-century Moskoni edition of the *Yosippon*. Compiled from sources in the Aegean, it became the best known version among Byzantine Jewry and the basis for the editio princeps from Mantua.⁸⁷ The Moskoni edition contains not the whole interpolation but rather a précis of it, which refers to the events surrounding Jesus as part of a series of “many disputes and great arguments in Judæa, between the Pharisees and rebels of the Jews, who followed Jesus son of Pandera, the Nazarene, who performed great wonders among the Jews, until the Pharisees defeated him and hanged him on a tree.”⁸⁸ Though we cannot fathom the degree to which the full interpolation might or might not be Byzantine in character, we can say that, in the Moskoni edition and those that follow it, we see a Byzantine version of the *Yosippon* that includes its vestiges.⁸⁹ The question then becomes, to what degree does this particular version of the *Yosippon* represent the abandonment (by virtue of truncation) or preservation (by virtue of inclusion) of the specifically ethnological, anti-Christian argument? On the one hand, Byzantine Hebrew authors did not adopt its logic in any wholesale, explicit manner, and the full-blown polemic did not become part of the Byzantine tradition of the *Yosippon*. On the other hand, the combined ethnic-religious consciousness of Rome-as-Esau seems to have been inculcated in the Byzantine-Jewish consciousness,

⁸⁷ Bowman, “Sefer Josippon,” 281; idem, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 135–7, 283–5; idem, “Dates in *Sefer Yosippon*,” 350–2.

⁸⁸ H. Hominer, ed., *Sefer Yosippon*, 3rd ed. (Jerusalem, 1967), 226–7, n. 4, provides the differences between the Mantua and Venice editions. See also, *Sefer Josippon*, 2:56; Lévi, “Jésus, Caligula et Claude,” 149–50, for the differences between the Mantua and Moskoni editions.

⁸⁹ Lévi, “Jésus, Caligula et Claude,” 152; *Sefer Josippon*, 2:53–6. Lévi argues that it probably comes from southern Italy, without any real proof, and Flusser links it with ms. tradition of the original *Yosippon*, which makes it relatively early.

and Jacob b. Reuben, at least, seems to preserve something of the *Yosipponic* tradition.⁹⁰

Further complicating the problem, a textual anomaly in the Rothschild edition (which Flusser places as an early version), near the juncture of the interpolation and the core text, puzzled both Lévi and Flusser. And it may represent a vestige of an anti-Christian element in the Edomite ethnography, even in the core text. When the interpolation ends, the text picks up again with Philo's argument against Apion.⁹¹ The story describes the Jews' calling of a fast, which succeeds in propitiating God, who moves a palace rebellion against Gaius. Replacing him, Claudius takes power (as in the interpolation) and appoints Agrippa over the Jews. In his turn, Agrippa's son replaces his father, and he must face strife

throughout the Land of Israel and the Land of Aram, *because Elazar, prince of the renegades, oppressed the entire land of Aram, destroying it.*⁹² For twenty years, he did not cease to take plunder and pillage and to kill people. And he littered Aram with corpses throughout, and in Judah too, he trampled on many,⁹³ until Felix, the Roman general, came with a great force and defeated his renegades. He captured him, imprisoned him with chains and carried him off to Rome.⁹⁴

Flusser, in his note to this section, questions the presence of Aram: "The author added it, but it is impossible to determine his intent."⁹⁵

Still, it is Flusser himself who offers a potential explanation. In his discussion of the anti-Christian interpolation, he points out that the Mantua edition's truncated version of it refers to Jesus "ben Joseph, etc., Elazar." He explains that "the name 'Elazar' was transposed into this cut-and-paste version [of the interpolation] from the story that follows it, about 'Elazar, prince of the renegades,' namely, Elazar b. Dinai, who is mentioned by Josephus and in Talmudic sources."⁹⁶ In the earlier, Moskoni edition, Jesus is called "ben Pandera, the Naza-

⁹⁰ See above, 81.

⁹¹ *Sefer Yosippon*, 1:272–4.

⁹² The italicized words are absent in the Mantua edition; Lévi, "Jesus, Caligula et Claude," 153–4, n. 7.

⁹³ Hominer, *Sefer Yosippon*, 228, n. 15, says that in the Mantua ed. has at this point the additional words: "he also trampled many bodies," which he thinks might be an additional population of Christians.

⁹⁴ *Sefer Yosippon*, 1:275.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, nn. 1–2, 3–4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:56, n. 152; Lévi, "Jesus, Caligula et Claude," 149–50.

rene,” a more well-known polemical trope intended to highlight Jesus’s illegitimate birth.⁹⁷ In other words, the Mantua edition’s version of the interpolation replaced Jesus with Elazar, probably on account of the same reason that the fuller anti-Christian interpolation had already been removed from the Moskoni and other editions: censorship.

In view of this confusion, two possibilities emerge. First, it is possible that Aram (אַרַם) is either a *lapsus calumni* or substitution for Edom (אֶדוֹם). The two words are distinguished, graphically, by only the slightest extension of a consonant and, orthographically, by a *mater lectionis*, which is the addition of an optional, place-holder consonant to signal a vowel.⁹⁸ With Edom so prominent in the polemic against Jesus, Church or Jewish censorship may have demanded the substitution of Aram for Edom, especially since Aram appears again (also near Elazar) in subsequent chapters.⁹⁹ Needless to say, the “minced up version” of this story, as Flusser rightly calls it, precludes definitive conclusions, and the conjecture of a *lapsus calumni* raises obvious problems. But the presence of a stand-in for both Jesus and Edom opens the possibility that the story of Paulina belonged to a wider stream of argumentation in the *Yosippon*—even in the original version—that was either left inchoate on purpose or that was removed over the generations by censorship.

If so, the interpolation proposes consciously to continue a marked association of Aram and Edom, which begins already in the core *Yosippon* text. Judean King Hyrcanus, long before the events surrounding Jesus, earns accolades for the “cities he captured from Aram and the mightiness he displayed against Macedonia, during which he pacified Edom and circumcised them.”¹⁰⁰ The *Yosippon* does not have to doctor this well-known chapter in Judean expansion; its sources already link Edom, or Idumea, with the nations around Judea.¹⁰¹ Thus, Hadar-ezer had fled from King David, when the latter “defeated Aram and Edom.”¹⁰² This connection, therefore, seems to fuel the possibility for convenient conflation—graphically or narratively. Such seems to be

⁹⁷ Cf. above, n. 88.

⁹⁸ *Sefer Josippon*, 1:275, if a *lapsus calumni*, it predates the version of the *Yosippon* that Flusser edited, as per the ms. in *Josippon: The Original Version*, 198–9.

⁹⁹ *Sefer Josippon*, 1:288ff.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:122.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1:136, n. 55.

¹⁰² See above, n. 36.

the case with another anti-Christian interpolation, also in the Rothschild text and placed almost adjacent to the interpolation analyzed above.¹⁰³ Following on the heels of the story of Paulina, which takes place in Rome, the interpolator continues:

Also in Aram, Amnostos the Roman had a daughter, a beautiful and attractive girl, named Liza.¹⁰⁴ She behaved lasciviously in secret, in her father's house, with a young man from among the rebels of our nation—for many Jews broke the yoke of law and quit Jerusalem to go astray with the gentiles of the land. The girl loved the rebel and became pregnant by him, so she sent for him saying, "Look, I am pregnant." He said to her, "Say to your father, 'God came to me in a dream saying, "Tell your father that it is my will that you be my prophetess and that you should bear me a son on earth.'" And further say to him 'I have in fact seen this vision a number of times,' and listen to what he tells you."

Her father, duly duped, acquiesces, and "she gave birth to a son, and the people of Aram were led astray by this deceit." In other words, it is possible that the interpolator has picked up on a line of thinking already in the original *Yosippon*, in which Aram serves as either a stand-in or a twin for Edom.

Still, even granting some continuity, perhaps censored out, in the systematic polemic that casts both Rome and Christianity as Edom, its failure to emerge in the foreground of Byzantine Hebrew literature mitigates its importance in Byzantine Jewish thought. This problem raises an altogether different possibility, according to which the highly systematic, ethnographical argument as applied to both Rome and Christianity represents not Byzantine-Jewish sensibilities, but more specifically Italian-Jewish ones.¹⁰⁵ This line of argumentation may have offered a compelling message to the Jews of burgeoning Western European Christianity, at a time when they were beginning to settle that world in significant numbers—in no small measure migrating from southern Italy. Both interpolations, dated no later than the mid-

¹⁰³ *Sefer Yosippon*, 1:271, 438.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:438, nn. 1–2, Flusser points out that the father's name may be the Greek for ἄμνηστος, or "forgotten," while the daughter's name is "none other than a corruption of Leda, mentioned in the *Yosippon* in chap. 57, l. 31," which is the chapter to which this story is appended.

¹⁰⁵ R. Bonfil, *Tra due mondi* (Naples, 1996), pt. 1, esp. 96–100, argues for the *Chronicle of Ahimaaz* as a manifesto of southern-Italian Jewish legal independence. That is, Jewish southern Italy may have begun the process of reorienting itself, if not northward, at least inward.

twelfth century, are found in the Rothschild ms., which is associated with Gershom b. Judah (960–1028), the eminent rabbi and key tradent of the core *Yosippon* text. Though R. Gershom lived in Mainz, Flusser points out that he may have been born in Ancona, as per one of the traditions about him.¹⁰⁶ Regardless of his birthplace, however, his participation in the copying of the *Yosippon* puts R. Gershom squarely in the demographic and literary flow that early on linked Italy to Germany.¹⁰⁷ His constituency, the Jews of Western Europe, needed some kind of orientation as to the relationships among key players in a world that was largely a new frontier for them. The ethnographic schema in the *Yosippon* could inform those Jews who did not clearly comprehend the multinational Christianity of the West. In this vein, the other great tradition of explicit ethnography, Abraham ibn Da'ud's *Sefer ha-kabbalah*, or *Book of Tradition*, similarly made sense of Western Christianity, or Edom, for a population that was encountering it, in large part, for the first time.¹⁰⁸ Though revising the *Yosippon*, Ibn Da'ud also relied on it, if nothing else because it spoke to an important part of his agenda.¹⁰⁹

When describing the experience of the Jews in Western Europe and the *Yosippon*'s message to them, Gerson Cohen argues that "it required no effort on the part of Jewish homilists to extend the name of Edom to Christendom. Esau might exchange his eagle for a cross, but he was Esau nonetheless."¹¹⁰ Perhaps the Jews of Byzantium did not necessarily need the *Yosippon*'s ethnographical explanation of Christianity as much as those in the Christian West did. Knowing those around them to be "Romaioi," calling them "Edomites," "Greeks," "Macedonians," and the like, Byzantine Jews had already grasped the national character of Christianity and the empire that claimed to define it.

¹⁰⁶ *Sefer Josippon*, 2:4–5.

¹⁰⁷ M. Shulvass, "Ashkenazic Jewry in Italy," *Yivo Annual of Jewish Social Science* 7 (1952): 110–31; S. Simonsohn, "סדר אליהו של 'סדר אליריה של' באספקלריה של 'יהודי אירופה הנוצרית באספקלריה של' סדר אליהו של" (*The Jews of Christian Europe according to the Seder Eliyahu Zuta*), *Scritti in memoria di Leone Carpi* (Jerusalem, 1967), 64–71; Neubauer, "Yerahmeel ben Shlomo," 368. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3rd ed. (London, 1955), 101–2. More recently, I. Ta-Shma, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, vol. 3, Italy and Byzantium (Jerusalem, 2005), 179.

¹⁰⁸ G. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, 252–3.

¹⁰⁹ M. Schwab, "Zikhron beit Romi," *Revue des Études Juives* 35 (1897): 289.

¹¹⁰ Cohen, "Esau as Symbol," 249.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AMONG BYZANTINE JEWS: THE CASE OF *SEFER YOSIPPON*

Saskia Dönitz

Southern Italy, called the “imperial edge” by Michael McCormick,¹ was different from the rest of the Byzantine Empire. One of the important differences consisted of a culture of language and literature characterized by the Greek as well as the Latin tradition. At the beginning of the ninth century, a Hebrew revival took place, testified first by tombstones in Greek and Hebrew and later by Hebrew poetry.² *Sefer Yosippon* or *Sefer Yosef ben Gorion* (Book of Yosippon or Book of Yosef ben Gorion) was the first Hebrew narrative prose text written in medieval Europe and composed at the end of the ninth/beginning of the tenth century in the very same area. Interestingly enough, *Sefer Yosippon* also represents the first historiographical work in medieval Judaism. The first part of the following article will deal with the book and its characteristics within the larger framework of Jewish historiography in the Middle Ages. Then I will discuss *Sefer Yosippon*’s sources, its transmission, and special features, taking into consideration its Byzantine origin. Finally, I will draw attention to the book’s reception in Byzantium as part of the medieval Jewish historiographical tradition.

¹ M. McCormick, “The Imperial Edge: Italo-Byzantine Identity, Movement and Integration, A.D. 650–950,” in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, eds., H. Ahrweiler and A. Laiou (Washington, 1998), 17–52.

² S. Simonsohn, “The Hebrew Revival among Early Medieval European Jews,” in *Salo Wittmayr Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday* (Jerusalem, 1974), Vol. II, 831–58, esp. pp. 853ff.; C. Colafemmina, “Hebrew Inscriptions of the Early Medieval Period in Southern Italy,” in *The Jews of Italy, Memory and Identity*, ed., B. Cooperman (Bethesda, 2000), 65–81; for poetry see B. Klar, ed., *Megillat Ahimaaz. The Chronicle of Ahimaaz, with a Collection of Poems from Byzantine Southern Italy and Additions*, 2nd edition (Jerusalem, 1974); E. Fleischer, “Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in Italy,” in *Italia Judaica, Atti del I Convegno internazionale, Bari 18–22 maggio 1981* (Roma, 1983), 415–26.

I. *SEFER YOSIPPON* AS PART OF MEDIEVAL JEWISH HISTORIOGRAPHY

Since the publication of Yosef Hayyim Yerushalmi's pioneering work *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* in 1982, it is *communis opinio* that medieval Jewish society was interested in history—in the double sense of *res gestae* and *historia*—but did not produce works of historiography. Notwithstanding some exceptions, according to Yerushalmi, there was no historiographical tradition after the destruction of the Temple and the comprehensive redefinition of Jewish belief known as rabbinic Judaism. Historiography was neglected from the first century C.E. and rediscovered only after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain at the end of the fifteenth/beginning of the sixteenth century. Yerushalmi denied the existence of historiography in medieval Jewish literature in the form of a *Gattung* with rules and traditions that could be compared to medieval Christian historiography.³

This thesis was challenged by Reuven Bonfil who showed that the number of historiographical works composed during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries within Jewish society was equal to the number of historiographical works written during the Middle Ages.⁴ Therefore it seems problematic to speak about a renewed historiographical tradition in Hebrew in the Renaissance. The exceptions noted by Yerushalmi are not so few. Most of the known historiographical works belong to the genre of the chain of tradition (שלשלת הקבלה), such as *Iggeret de Rav Sherira Gaon*, *Seder Tannaim we-Amoraim*, *Seder Olam*, and Abraham ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-Qabbala*.⁵ Others refer to the more remote past, like *Sefer Yosippon*. Finally there are books describing contemporary history, such as the *Hebrew Crusade Chronicles*, *Sippur Nathan ha-*

³ Y. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Philadelphia, 1982); see also Y. Yerushalmi, "Clio and the Jews: Reflections in Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century," *PAAJR* 47 (1979): 607–38, esp. pp. 616f.

⁴ R. Bonfil, "Jewish Attitudes toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times," in *Jewish History* 11 (1997): 7–40; Idem, "How Golden was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?" in *Essays in Jewish Historiography*, ed., A. Rapoport-Albert (Middletown, 1988), 78–102, esp. pp. 85f.; Idem, "Esiste una storiografia ebraica medioevale?" in *Aspetti della storiografia ebraica, Atti del IV Congresso internazionale dell' AISG. Miniato, 7–10 Novembre 1983*, ed., F. Parente (Roma, 1987), 227–47.

⁵ Which according to Yerushalmi do not fit into the definition of historiography, but see F. Astren, *Karaite Judaism and Historical Understanding* (Columbia, 2004), 40–64.

Bavli, and *Megillat Ahima'az*.⁶ *Sefer Yosippon*, therefore, accounts for a deep interest in the time of the Second Temple and its ramifications for the Jewish Diaspora presence during the Middle Ages.

II. SEFER YOSIPPON: SOURCES AND FEATURES

Sefer Yosippon belies another common notion: it is widely accepted that after the destruction of the Temple the Jewish-Hellenistic works of the Second Temple Period, especially the works of Flavius Josephus, were transmitted exclusively within Christian literature. Josephus's *Antiquitates* along with the *Bellum Judaicum* became extremely popular among Christian authors because they offer information about Jesus and his lifetime outside of the New Testament.⁷

Sefer Yosippon questions this assumption. The author/redactor reworked Josephus's *Antiquitates* and the *Bellum Judaicum* into a well-written historiographical description of the history of the Jewish people among the nations from the Babylonian Exile to the destruction of the Second Temple. The title *Sefer Yosef ben Gorion* hints at one of the book's main sources, the Latin reworking of Josephus's *Bellum Judaicum* known as Ps-Hegesippus's *De excidio Hierosolymitano* (fourth century). In the chapter on the appointment of the leaders of the Judean army, the name of Joseph ben Matatyahu, i.e. Flavius Josephus, is missing in *De Excidio*. The Hebrew author therefore mistakenly identified Yosef ben Gorion, who is named among the leaders, with Flavius Josephus.

Since Josephus mentioned an Aramaic version of *Bellum Judaicum*, *Sefer Yosef ben Gorion* or *Sefer Yosippon* was regarded as this Aramaic work written by Josephus himself.⁸ This designation became widespread in medieval Hebrew and later also in Latin literature. The attribution to Josephus contributed to the diffusion and the authority

⁶ Yerushalmi did not refer to the two aforementioned works. He also did not discuss the compilation *Sefer ha-Zikhronot* (Book of Memories, Rhineland 1325), in which many historical texts are included, e.g. *Sefer Yosippon* and the *Hebrew Crusade Chronicles*; see E. Yassif, *The Book of Memories, that is the Chronicles of Jerahme'el* (Tel Aviv, 2001) (Hebrew), see below p. 12.

⁷ S. Bowman, "Josephus in Byzantium," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, eds., L. Feldman and G. Hata (Leiden, 1987), 362–85; H. Schreckenberg, *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche und Textkritische Untersuchungen zu Flavius Josephus* (Leiden, 1977); Idem, *Die Flavius-Josephus Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter* (Leiden, 1972).

⁸ *Bellum Judaicum* I, 3.

of *Sefer Yosippon* which was read among Jews in Sefarad, Ashkenaz, Byzantium, and Palestine.⁹

The most important publication concerning *Sefer Yosippon* was written by David Flusser. He edited an early version of this text accompanied by a second volume devoted to the discussion of origin and dating.¹⁰ His results testify to long years of intensive research dedicated to the reconstruction of the *Urfassung* and its sources as well as its cultural background. The dating of the text has been an important question. Leopold Zunz already stated that *Sefer Yosippon* was written in tenth-century Italy.¹¹ Flusser confirmed Zunz's dating of the text by offering linguistic and literary arguments and locating the author in the region of Naples. In addition, he found a note in one of the Ashkenazi textual witnesses (MS Rothschild 24, dated fifteenth century, fol. 249v), saying that this text was copied in the year 886 from the destruction of the Temple (i.e. 953 C.E.). He tried to establish this note as proof that *Sefer Yosippon* was written in exactly that year.¹²

This dating has been questioned several times due to the character and content of the book, which make a composition at the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century more likely.¹³ Moreover, it is possible to trace a familiarity with *Sefer Yosippon* in several earlier sources that contradict this later date. Dunash ibn Tamim as well as Saadia Gaon knew the book, probably in its Judeo-Arabic translation.¹⁴ Therefore it is impossible to date it to 953, since Saadia Gaon already

⁹ The perception and reception of the *Sefer Yosippon* in medieval Jewish literature was the subject of my PhD thesis written under the supervision of Prof. Peter Schäfer at the Freie Universität Berlin (forthcoming). I am very thankful for his constant support.

¹⁰ D. Flusser, *The Josippon. [Josephus Gorionides]. Ed. with introd., Commentary and Notes*, Jerusalem 1980–81, 2 vols. (Hebrew). Numbers of chapters in *Sefer Yosippon* given in this article refer to this edition.

¹¹ L. Zunz, *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt* (Frankfurt a.M. 21892), 154–62.

¹² Flusser Vol. II, 79–84.

¹³ See I. Ta-Shma, "The Literary Content of the Manuscript," in *The Rothschild Miscellany*, ed. I. Fishof (Jerusalem, 1989), 76; R. Bonfil, "Sefer Yosippon: Sifrut ke-Historia," *Dawar* 28/9 (1981): 13–4; Idem, "Between Eretz Israel and Bavel," *Shalem* 5 (1987): 1–30 (Hebrew), esp. pp. 29f.

¹⁴ G. Vajda, "Nouveaux fragments arabes du commentaire de Dunash b. Tamim sur le 'Livre de la Création'," *REJ* 13 (1954): 37–43, quotation p. 40; for Saadia see S. Sela, "The History of the Hasmonean Period in the Judeo-Arabic Literature of the Middle Ages," *Michael* 14 (1997): 9–28 (Hebrew), esp. p. 22; H. Malter, *Saadia Gaon: His Life and Works* (Philadelphia, 1921), 353f.

died in 942. If he knew *Sefer Yosippon*, the Hebrew text must have been written at the beginning of the tenth century at the latest.

In the course of my research on the transmission and reception of *Sefer Yosippon*, I discovered that Flusser's text does not represent the oldest recension. After analyzing the manuscripts of *Sefer Yosippon* known to us today, I compiled twenty-five Hebrew manuscripts preserved in the Cairo Geniza which were only partly included in Flusser's edition. Some of them can be dated to the eleventh century.¹⁵ They show a different structure and wording from the version edited by Flusser and also from the Jerusalem manuscript published in facsimile form in 1978, which until now has been the oldest manuscript known to us (dating from 1272). Therefore, it can be concluded that there must have been an older recension of the text which is transmitted in the fragments of the Cairo Geniza and in one Italian manuscript.¹⁶

A similar notion was discussed by Shulamit Sela in her work concerning the Arabic translation of this book.¹⁷ She argues that the Judeo-Arabic translation of *Sefer Yosippon* as well as the Arabic Book of the Maccabees represent a glimpse of an earlier textual stage of *Sefer Yosippon* which to her mind is not transmitted in Hebrew.¹⁸ She derives her arguments from a literary analysis comparing motifs in the Arabic Book of the Maccabees, the Judeo-Arabic translation of *Sefer Yosippon*, and the Hebrew text.¹⁹ A central part of her dissertation is the publication of the Judeo-Arabic fragments of the translation of *Sefer Yosippon*. The transmission history of the Arabic *Sefer Yosippon* has to be reconsidered after the posthumous publication of her dissertation.

¹⁵ I want to thank Dr. Edna Engel (IMHM, Jerusalem) for her very kind help in dating the fragments.

¹⁶ These differences are shown in the wordings and the structure of certain chapters, see my forthcoming PhD on the transmission and reception history of *Sefer Yosippon*. My next project will be to edit the Cairo Geniza fragments.

¹⁷ S. Sela, *The Arabic Josippon* (Jerusalem, 2009), 2 vols. (Hebrew). For a discussion of her work, see chapter 3 in my forthcoming PhD. On this occasion I would like to express my special gratitude to Prof. Haggai Ben Shammai for allowing me to look at Shulamit Sela's manuscript at Makhon Ben Zvi before its publication.

¹⁸ One of these stages could be a Hebrew translation of the Arabic Book of the Maccabees published by J. Wellhausen, "Der arabische Josippus," in *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Neue Folge Bd. 1, Nr. 4* (Berlin, 1897).

¹⁹ This methodology seems problematic since she does not refer to the manuscripts of *Sefer Yosippon*, but to Flusser's edition which offers an eclectic text.

III. SEFER YOSIPPON AS A COUNTER-HISTORY TO *DE EXCIDIO*

Let us return to the content of *Sefer Yosippon*. The unknown author/redactor did not use only the works of Flavius Josephus. The book consists of 89 chapters beginning with the list of the nations from chapter ten of Genesis, followed by a foundation story of Rome referring to Vergil's *Aeneis* and Livius's *Ab urbe condita*. Chapters 3–10 draw on Josephus's *Antiquitates* and on apocryphal works from the Bible including the additions to the Septuagint.²⁰ They describe the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Exile and the rebuilding of the Temple, the story of Esther and Mordechai, and Alexander's visit to Jerusalem. Chapters 11–26 are modelled on Josephus's *Antiquitates* as well as the First and Second *Book of the Maccabees*, including the legend of the Septuagint and the famous stories about the martyrdom of Eleazar as well as of Chana and her seven sons. In chapters 26–50, the text depends on Josephus's *Antiquities*, Books 9–16.

Chapters 50–89, which represent more or less the second half of *Sefer Yosippon*, are a reworking of Ps-Hegesippus's *De excidio Hierosolymitano*. In addition to these sources, there are traces of the author/redactor's familiarity with writings like Jerome's continuation of Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Jerome's *De viris illustribus*, Orosius's *Historia contra Paganos*, Livy's *Ab urbe condita*, Virgil's *Aeneis*, and even perhaps contemporary Byzantine chronicles. We find not only works originating in the Jewish tradition that were not transmitted as part of the Jewish canon, but also literature written by Christians that is considered reliable as a source for Jewish history.²¹

A thorough comparison of *Sefer Yosippon* and its sources is still a desideratum and cannot be done in the framework of this article. For a better understanding of the intentions of *Sefer Yosippon*, such an analysis would be crucial. To begin with, let us take a closer look at one of its lesser known sources, *De excidio Hierosolymitano*.²²

²⁰ See S. Dönitz, "Sefer Yosippon and the Greek Bible," in *Jewish Reception of Greek Bible Versions*, eds., N. de Lange, J. Krivoruchko and C. Boyd-Taylor (Tübingen, 2009), 223–34.

²¹ See G. Veltri, *Gegenwart der Tradition. Studien zur jüdischen Literatur und Kulturgeschichte* (Leiden, 2002), 122–32.

²² V. Ussani, *Hegesippi qui dicitur historiae libri V*, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Bd. LXVI, Part 1 (Leipzig, 1932), Part 2 (K. Mras) (Wien, 1960).

This text was possibly produced at the end of the fourth century.²³ Due to geographical descriptions, it has been suggested that the author might have lived in Antioch, maybe as a member of Antioch's exegetical school to which John Chrysostom also belonged.²⁴ From the ninth century onwards, the anonymous author of this text was mistakenly identified as the second-century Church Father Hegesippus quoted in Eusebius, therefore called today Ps-Hegesippus.²⁵

Modern research has not paid much attention to *De excidio*. Yet in the seventies of the twentieth century, several articles and two unpublished American theses dealt with it and compared parts of the text with Josephus and *Sefer Yosippon*.²⁶ They confirmed the conclusion already drawn by the text's editor Ussani: *De excidio* shows an especially strong anti-Jewish attitude. While Josephus tried to write a positive presentation of the Flavian Dynasty and the Roman army, nevertheless emphasizing apologetically the bravery and the heroism of the Jews during the war, *De excidio* concentrates on the Christian argument saying that the destruction of the Temple represents God's punishment of the Jews:

Like most Christians of his day, Hegesippus wants to show that the Jews are no longer God's chosen people. That favoured position has been inherited by the Christians. Instead of using invectives, as John Chrysostom did, Hegesippus tries to rewrite the account of that crucial period in Jewish (and Christian) history to show that the Jews themselves caused this change.²⁷

Since the Gospels, it was argued that the destruction of the Temple is God's punishment to the Jews for killing Jesus. *De excidio* focuses on Josephus's description of the Jewish War, specifically the destruction

²³ First quoted by Eucherius of Lyon in 430; probably written between 370–375.

²⁴ The identity of the author was subject to discussion, see O. Scholz, "Die Hegesippus-Ambrosius-Frage. Eine literaturhistorische Besprechung," *Ambrosiaster-Studien* 8 (1909): 149–95; A. Bell, "Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, eds., L. Feldman and G. Hata (Leiden, 1987), 349–61.

²⁵ For the church father Hegesippus see the article by Oded Irshai in this volume.

²⁶ A. Bell, "An Historiographical Analysis of *De excidio hierosolymitano* of Pseudo-Hegesippus," (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1977); E. Sorscher, "A Comparison of Three Texts: The Wars, the Hegesippus and the Yosippon," (M.A. diss., Yeshiva University, New York, 1973). A summary of Bell's results was published as Bell, *Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus* (see note 24).

²⁷ Bell, "An Historiographical Analysis" (see note 26), 215; *De excidio* 2,3,3 (Ussani, 136, ll. 9–11): *propositum nobis est aperire causas, quibus populus Iudaeorum a Romano imperio desciverit sibiue exitium acceleraverit.*

of Jerusalem, saying that Josephus did not understand the true reason for the Jews' defeat. In the course of suggesting this interpretation, all the heroic representations of the Jewish fighters are erased. The author of *De excidio* explicitly states the notion that God will destroy the Jewish race.²⁸ A similar tendency is noted in Eusebius's use of Josephus in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* that was written in the same century and also in Palestine.²⁹ *De excidio*, therefore, is part of the ongoing debate between the two religions about true faith and the claim to be God's chosen people, especially in a time when Christianity was gaining strength and power.

Why did the tenth-century author/redactor of *Sefer Yosippon* choose this text as his source? One reason could be the fact that he did not have access to the second, more literal Latin translation of Josephus's *Jewish War* initiated by Cassiodor in the sixth century, and *De excidio* was the only text he knew. On the other hand, manuscripts of Josephus's works circulated widely in medieval southern Italy during this period. As Flusser has argued, the author/redactor of *Sefer Yosippon* may have used a Latin manuscript containing Books 9–16 of Josephus's *Antiquitates* as well as the five books of Ps-Hegesippus's *De excidio*.³⁰ There are at least three Latin manuscripts from southern Italy showing exactly this structure, and they were probably written in the tenth and the eleventh century.³¹ Because of *Sefer Yosippon*'s paraphrasing character, it is difficult to determine which kind of source lay before the eyes of the author/redactor.

Another possible reason could be that he chose this text in order to utilize it as a model and his intention was to write a counter-history. This means that the author of *Sefer Yosippon* continued the discussion started by the author of *De excidio*, who introduced Christian and anti-Jewish elements into Josephus's text. The author/redactor of *Sefer Yosippon* rewrote *De excidio*, dropping all passages regarding to Jesus or Christianity and omitting all disparaging representations of the Jews. Instead, he partly reconstructed Josephus's notion that a group of rebels among the Jews was to blame because they started the

²⁸ See Ussani, 373, ll. 22–3.

²⁹ G. Hata, "The Abuse and Misuse of Josephus in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, Books 2 and 3," in *Studies in Josephus and the Varieties of Ancient Judaism*. Louis H. Feldman Jubilee Volume, eds., S. Cohen and J. Schwartz (Leiden, 2007), 91–102.

³⁰ Flusser, Vol, II, 120–32.

³¹ F. Blatt, *The Latin Josephus*, Ant. libri I–V (Aarhus, 1958), 27–42.

war against Rome. Moreover, he integrated the rabbinic notion that in general the Jews were guilty of the destruction of the Temple because they abandoned the Torah given by God.³² According to *Sefer Yosippon*, God's punishment referred to their sins and to the fact that a small group of Jews resisted God's decision that Rome would become the next *imperium*.³³ In this way, Josephus was reintegrated into the Hebrew tradition and the Christian claim on the Hellenistic-Jewish writer was invalidated.

In contrast to Josephus, *Sefer Yosippon* does not emphasize the skill and bravery of the Roman army. Its main interest is to emphasize the bravery and idealism of the Jewish people by portraying their readiness to fight and die defending their land and their religion. The Jewish warriors are given many opportunities to eloquently express the lofty ideals which spur them on to battle. Choosing *De excidio* as his source, the redactor of *Sefer Yosippon* seems to answer Ps-Hegesippus's accusation in an apologetic manner by giving a different picture of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The author/redactor of *Sefer Yosippon* introduced the more religious notion that those who were ready to sacrifice and die in battle for God, the Temple, and their land will be rewarded with a place in heaven, near the great light.³⁴ Since this motive is found neither in *De excidio* nor in Josephus, it is possible that the author/redactor of *Sefer Yosippon* took it from contemporary Christian ideology of battle. Pope Leo IV (847–855), Pope John VIII (872–882), and Pope Leo IX (1049–1054) promised that every soldier who dies in a war against the Muslims or the Normans will get absolution and will have a place in the celestial kingdom.³⁵ In *Sefer Yosippon*, Yosef ben Gorion offers absolution from sins to his followers if they are ready to die in combat with the Romans.³⁶ It seems as if the author of *Sefer Yosippon*

³² See for example *Sefer Yosippon*, Chap. 73, ll. 70–7.

³³ Flusser, Vol. II, 172; I. Baer, "The Hebrew *Sefer Yosifun*," in *Sefer Dinaburg Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1949), 178–205 (Hebrew), esp. 185f.

³⁴ On this motive see R. Chazan, *God, Humanity and History: The Hebrew First Crusade Narratives* (Berkeley, 2000), 191–200; S. Shepkaru, "From Death to Afterlife: Martyrdom and its Recompense," *AJS Review* 24 (1999): 1–44; L. Roos, *God Wants It! The Ideology of Martyrdom of the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles and its Jewish and Christian Background* (Turnhout, 2006).

³⁵ See Flusser, Vol. II, 96; C. Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens* (Stuttgart, 1965), 23; N. Paulus, *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 2000), 53.

³⁶ Chapter 67, ll. 32–4.

intentionally picked up Christian motives to legitimize his ideology of Jewish warriors as martyrs fighting in a Holy War. Absolution also became part of Crusader ideology in 1096 on the Christian as well as on the Jewish side.³⁷ Therefore it is not surprising that the authors of the *Hebrew Crusade Chronicles*, influenced by Christian ideas, borrowed some motives from *Sefer Yosippon*'s ideology of martyrdom.³⁸ Still, the central subject between Jews and Christians is the ongoing, sometimes violent argument about each one's claim to be the true people of God.³⁹

The composition of *Sefer Yosippon* seems to be a product of Latin, Byzantine, and Jewish culture merging in southern Italy. It may not be accidental that a book like *Sefer Yosippon* was composed in this region where Greek, Latin, and Jewish cultures existed side-by-side. Its reworking of Josephus's Latin works mirrors the contact and the debate between the religions about the true interpretation of the destruction of the Temple. The tendency to reintegrate material into the Jewish tradition that was transmitted among Christians in Greek and Latin fits the cultural picture of the Jews in southern Italy who were familiar with both languages and lived in close contact with their neighbours.

IV. WORKS OF THE SECOND TEMPLE IN MEDIEVAL JEWISH LITERATURE

Sefer Yosippon shows a tendency to draw on Second Temple literature, such as Josephus, as well as the Greek Bible, including the additions to the Septuagint.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the author/redactor refers to pagan as well as Christian sources, e.g. Virgil and Eusebius. *Sefer Yosippon* is particularly interested in filling in the gaps in Jewish biblical and post-biblical literature. It can be said then, that there is a tendency to supplement the Biblical narrative about the history of the Jews and to counteract the Christian notions about it. Interestingly, this material mostly stems from the period of the Second Temple and was written in Greek or Latin, sometimes only transmitted by Christians. It seems

³⁷ S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1951), 32, 84.

³⁸ See in-depth discussion of this question in my PhD (forthcoming).

³⁹ All the conclusions drawn here can only be a starting point for further discussions including a thorough comparison between *De Excidio* and *Sefer Yosippon* which has only very partly been done by Flusser in his edition.

⁴⁰ Although he probably used a Latin translation.

as if the redactor of *Sefer Yosippon* felt the necessity to reintegrate these sources into the Jewish textual tradition in Hebrew.⁴¹

This tendency to supply material from the Second Temple period is also present in several medieval midrashim, e.g. *Midrash Tadshe*, *Divre ha-Yamim shel Moshe*, *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer*, *Midrash Vayosha*, and *Bereshit Rabbati*.⁴² Further research on the modes of transmission of Jewish Hellenistic material from the Second Temple period to medieval times would be highly desirable. From the ninth/tenth century on, a renewed interest in texts concerning the time of the Maccabees is documented by *Megillat Antiochus*, the Chanukka Midrashim, the Hebrew translation of First Maccabees, and the Hebrew translation of *Sefer Yehudit*.⁴³ The chapters about the Maccabees in *Sefer Yosippon* are also part of this new interest.⁴⁴

We can find a similar tendency in the collection of works collected and copied by Yerahmeel ben Salomo in twelfth-century Italy. Several works copied by him are transmitted in the *Sefer ha-Zikhronot* (Book of Memories), a huge collection of texts completed in 1325 by Eleazar ben Asher ha-Levi.⁴⁵ Looking at these texts, one feature becomes very clear: Yerahmeel, too, was interested in works outside of the Jewish canon. He probably translated the Aramaic parts of the biblical Book of Daniel into Hebrew, including the additions to the Septuagint. More illuminating to my argument is the fact that he may have translated parts of Ps-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* from Latin

⁴¹ See Dönitz, "Sefer Yosippon and the Greek Bible," (above note 20).

⁴² *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer* seems to know the Book of Jubilees, *Bereshit Rabbati* shows traces of the Testament of Naphtali, see I. Ta-Shma, רבי משה הדרשן והספרות, in: id., *Studies in Rabbinic Literature, Vol. 3: Italy and Byzantium* (Jerusalem, 2005), 188–201; J. Reeves, "Exploring the Afterlife of Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Medieval Near East Religious Traditions: Some Initial Soundings," *JSJ* 30 (1999): 148–77; M. Stone, "Testament of Naphtali," *JJS* 47 (1996): 311–21; S. Ballaban, "The Enigma of the Lost Temple Literature: Routes of Discovery," (PhD diss., Hebrew Union College, 1994); M. Himmelfarb, "R. Moses the Preacher and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *AJS Review* 9 (1984): 55–78; see also Flusser, Vol. II, 148–50.

⁴³ M. Kadari, "Megillat Antiochus," *Bar Ilan* 1 (1963): 81–105; 2 (1964): 178–214 (Hebrew); I. Grintz, *Book of Judith* (Jerusalem, 1957), 196–208 (Hebrew); D. Chwolson, "Sarid u-Palit," *Qobetz al Yad* 7 (1896/97): 3–14; A. Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, Vol. I (Jerusalem, 1938), 132–41, and *Bet ha-Midrash* VI, 1–3.

⁴⁴ *Sefer Yosippon*, Chapters 13–26.

⁴⁵ Yassif, *Sefer ha-Zikhronot* (see note 6). See also H. Jacobson, "Thoughts on the Chronicles of Jerahmeel, Ps-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, and their Relationship," *Studio Philonica Annual* 9 (1997): 239–63, who argues for only a small number of works that were copied by Yerahmeel.

to Hebrew.⁴⁶ This shows that Yerahmeel continued *Sefer Yosippon*'s preference of drawing on Jewish-Hellenistic material transmitted by Christians and that he was interested in bridging the gaps of the post-biblical history of the Jews.

Both of these works, *Sefer Yosippon* and Yerahmeel's collection, seem to prove that the Jews living and writing in southern Italy were close to classical traditions and texts, especially those from the Second Temple period. Later, *Sefer Yosippon* and Yerahmeel were transferred to Ashkenaz.⁴⁷ Bonfil even talks about a historiographical tradition in medieval Ashkenaz transmitted from Italy.⁴⁸ This can be supported by the fact that *Sefer ha-Zikhronot* includes a copy of *Sefer Yosippon* as well as Yerahmeel's works. Eleazar ben Asher ha-Levi, the collector of these texts, explicitly legitimized his efforts in the preface to *Sefer ha-Zikhronot* by saying that he wanted to preserve texts that otherwise would have been lost to the Jewish tradition.⁴⁹ Besides for the mainstream of Jewish traditional writing, there were efforts to integrate historical material from Second Temple writings into the Jewish library.

V. JEWISH BYZANTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Could *Sefer Yosippon* have served as a model for coming generations of the way medieval Jewry wrote historiography? It must be mentioned that this work was redacted several times. Today we know of about 70 manuscripts. Moreover, there are at least two abridged versions, one written by the Spanish author Abraham ibn Daud.⁵⁰ The number of manuscripts, the fact that this book underwent several redactions, and

⁴⁶ See Yassif, *Book of Memories* (see note 6), Introduction, 23–31.

⁴⁷ This is true as well for *Megillat Ahima'az* (Scroll of Ahima'az) written in the eleventh century in Capua; see Klar, *Megillat Ahimaaz* (note 2).

⁴⁸ Bonfil, *Jewish Attitudes* (see note 4), 26f. On this subject see also S. Dönitz, "Von Italien nach Ashkenaz: *Sefer Yosippon* und die historiographische Tradition des Mittelalters," in *Orient als Grenzgebiet? Rabbinisches und Außerrabbinisches Judentum*, eds., A. Kuyt and G. Necker (Wiesbaden, 2008), 169–82.

⁴⁹ Yassif, *Sefer ha-Zikhronot* (see note 6), 33–40, 69–71. For Jewish historiography in Spain and in Provence, see R. Ben-Shalom, *Facing Christian Culture: Historical Consciousness and Images of the Past among Jews of Spain and Southern France during the Middle Ages* (Jerusalem, 2006) (Hebrew).

⁵⁰ Oxford, Bodl. Lib. MS Hunt. 345 (Neubauer 793/2), fols. 218v–245v [F 20330]; Abraham Ibn Daud, *Divre Malkhe Israel ba-Beit ha-Sheni* (Mantua, 1514); see K. Vehlow, "Dorot Olam: A Critical Edition and Translation of Abraham Ibn Daud's Universal History" (PhD diss., NYU, 2006) (forthcoming).

the number of quotations show that this book was one of the most disseminated works in medieval Jewry.

Yerushalmi's thesis of the non-existence of historiographic literature in medieval Jewish society cannot only be challenged by the existence of works like *Sefer Yosippon*. It can also be countered by analyzing the transmission and the reception of existing Hebrew historiographic works of the Middle Ages. Yerushalmi did not take into account the many revised copies of historiographic literature that were produced during the Middle Ages, for example of *Iggeret de Rav Sherira Gaon*, the *Hebrew Crusade Chronicles*, or *Sefer Yosippon*, although an aggressive style of transmission was common practise among medieval copyists.⁵¹ There was a historiographic tradition among the Jews in medieval times comprised of reading, reshaping, and rewriting existing texts rather than producing new works.⁵²

Sefer Yosippon was not only quoted by most of the medieval Jewish exegetes, *Payytanim*, and historical narrative writers, it was also copied numerous times and reworked into at least three recensions.⁵³ The following section discusses the third recension of *Sefer Yosippon* that was probably done by the fourteenth-century Byzantine rabbi Yehuda Leon Mosconi as an example of the way Byzantine culture influenced Jewish medieval historiography.

The three recensions (A, B, and C) of *Sefer Yosippon* are distinguished by style and by additional texts which were added or detached from the book.⁵⁴ Thus, in recension B, parts of the Alexanderromance in Hebrew are integrated. Recension C shows several additions taken from Greek and Latin sources.⁵⁵ First, there are additional parts from

⁵¹ See M. Schlüter, *Auf welche Weise wurde die Mishna geschrieben?* (Tübingen, 1993); and E. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während des Ersten Kreuzzugs* (Hannover, 2005).

⁵² M. Beit-Arié, "Publication and Reproduction of Literary Texts in Medieval Jewish Civilization: Jewish Scribality and Its Impact on the Texts Transmitted," in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion*, eds., Y. Elman and I. Gershoni (London, 2000), 225–47; Idem, "Transmission of Texts by Scribes and Copyists: Unconscious and Critical Interferences," in *Artefact and Text: The Re-Creation of Jewish Literature in Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts*, eds., P. Alexander and A. Samely (Manchester, 1993), 33–52.

⁵³ See my forthcoming PhD and S. Bowman, "'Yosippon' and Jewish Nationalism," *PAAJR* 61 (1995): 23–51; Flusser, Vol. II, 3–53, 63–74.

⁵⁴ For a description of the recensions of *Sefer Yosippon* see my forthcoming PhD and Flusser, Vol. II, 3–53.

⁵⁵ Moreover, recension C also shows a narrative reworking. Speeches were added or enlarged and quotations from the Bible and Talmud were inserted; see H. Hominer,

De Excidio.⁵⁶ This means the copyist of recension C knew that *Sefer Yosippon*'s source was not the Greek *Bellum Judaicum* but its Latin reworking from the fourth century. Second, a description of Vespasian's coronation is included. Although the source for this text has not yet been identified, it is probably based on one of the Latin *ordines* which are transmitted in numerous versions from the ninth century onwards.⁵⁷ Moreover, there are texts integrated into recension C that were copied from Macrobius's *Saturnalia* as well as his commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*. Yitzhaq Baer also argues for several other Latin texts serving as sources for recension C, for example, Sallust, *De Catilinae Coniuratione* or Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes*.⁵⁸ It can be assumed that the reworking of *Sefer Yosippon* must have taken place in a region where all these texts were available in Latin or in Greek.

The manuscripts hint at the possibility that recension C of *Sefer Yosippon* was produced in Byzantium. All the manuscripts of *Sefer Yosippon*'s recension C include a foreword written by the Byzantine Rabbi Yehuda Mosconi.⁵⁹ In it he tells his readers that he found five different "books" of *Sefer Yosippon*. Obviously, he saw manuscripts representing different recensions of *Sefer Yosippon*. Finally, he says that he decided to pick the longest one as a *vorlage* for his version. Although he only talks about copying it, it is much more probable that he produced recension C since until today we found no manuscript of recension C that does not contain Mosconi's foreword. Therefore it is likely that recension C of *Sefer Yosippon* was compiled by Mosconi in fourteenth-century Byzantium.⁶⁰

The number of extant manuscripts of Josephus's works in Byzantium shows the popularity of this Jewish-Greek writer.⁶¹ Josephus's central role in Byzantine historiography may also have been perceived by the Jews living in the Byzantine cultural area between the tenth and the

Josiphon of Joseph Ben Gorion ha-Cohen. Reprinted according to the complete Edition of Venice 5304 (1544) with Supplements from the Mantua Edition 5238–5240 (1478–80) and the Constantinople Edition 5270 (1510), 3rd Edition (Jerusalem, 1967).

⁵⁶ E.g. Hominer, chap. 70 stems from *De excidio* III 1, 1.

⁵⁷ Flusser, Vol. II, 32–42.

⁵⁸ Baer, *Hebrew Sefer Josifun* (see note 33), *passim*.

⁵⁹ Hominer, 34–40.

⁶⁰ Flusser argues for a date of recension C in the twelfth century; see Flusser, Vol. II, 25–32; I found another manuscript of recension C in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milano which is also introduced by Mosconi's foreword.

⁶¹ Bowman, "Josephus in Byzantium" (see note 7), 368f.

fourteenth century. Quotations from *Sefer Yosippon*, Josephus's supposed Hebrew original, by Tobia ben Eliezer (eleventh century) and Yehuda Hadassi (twelfth century) are proof of this notion. Therefore, it may not be astonishing that Yehuda Mosconi started purchasing manuscripts of *Sefer Yosippon*.

According to his own evidence, Yehuda was born 1328 in Ohrid.⁶² In Negropont (Euböa), he studied with Shemarya ben Eliah ben Jacob (end of thirteenth century to 1358) from Crete. His studies were dedicated to medicine, grammar, philosophy, mystical, and rabbinical texts, especially the commentaries of Abraham ibn Ezra. Later he travelled to Cyprus, Asia Minor, Egypt, Morocco, Italy, and Southern France. During these travels he collected manuscripts of Ibn Ezra and of *Sefer Yosippon*. At the beginning of the 1360s, Mosconi settled in Majorca and began to work on two projects: a supercommentary on Ibn Ezra and a new recension of *Sefer Yosippon*.⁶³

What about his knowledge of languages? He was born in Ohrid, but soon travelled to other places in Greece. In his lifetime, some of these were under Venetian rule in his lifetime, for example Euböa. His teacher, Shemarya ha-Iqriti, was born in Crete, which was part of the region under Venetian influence. We also know that Shemarya ha-Iqriti translated works from Greek and Latin into Hebrew. Therefore it is very likely that—in addition to Hebrew—Mosconi knew Greek as the spoken language in his environment, maybe even Latin.⁶⁴

Is it possible that a Byzantine Jewish redactor knew Macrobius, *De excidio*, Sallust, and Cicero?⁶⁵ After a closer look, we find several Greek translations of Latin texts dating to the end of the thirteenth/beginning of the fourteenth century in Byzantium. During the time of the

⁶² See his introduction to the supercommentary on Ibn Ezra in A. Berliner, *Ozar Tov I* (Berlin, 1878), 1–10.

⁶³ S. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium 1204–1453* (Tuscaloosa, 1985), 133–7. For Mosconi's supercommentary on Ibn Ezra see U. Simon, "Interpreting the Interpreter: Supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra's Commentaries," in *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra: Studies in the Writings of a Twelfth-Century Jewish Polymath*, eds., I. Twersky and J. Harris (Cambridge, 1993), 86–128; and N. de Lange, "Abraham Ibn Ezra and Byzantium," in *Abraham Ibn Ezra y su Tiempo*, ed., F. Esteban (Madrid, 1990), 181–92.

⁶⁴ Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium* (see note 63), only speaks about the knowledge of the Greek language, comp. pp. 164–8.

⁶⁵ Posing this question to Prof. Dr. Jannis Niehoff-Panagiotidis (FU Berlin), it became clear that the subject of Latin literature read in Byzantium has to our knowledge not yet been handled in the research of Byzantine culture and literature. I thank him very much for his help and wonderful support.

Paleologians (1259–1453), the Byzantines' interest in Western theological and profane texts grew.⁶⁶ Maximus Planudes translated Augustin, Boethius, Cicero, and Ovid from Latin into Greek. His most important work touching on our subject is his translation of Macrobius's Commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* into Greek.⁶⁷ This text was therefore known among Byzantine scholars. Thus, it is possible that the Mosconi knew its Latin or Greek version too and integrated it into his recension of *Sefer Yosippon*.

Transmitting ancient texts with the help of editing and philology belongs to the most prominent contributions of Byzantium to European culture. At the end of the thirteenth/beginning of the fourteenth century, the above-mentioned Maximus Planudes produced critical editions of Hesiod, Pindar, and Ptolemy. His colleague and contemporary, Demetrios Triklinios, revised and corrected manuscripts of Hesiod, Pindar, Aristophanes, and Euripides.⁶⁸ Thus Mosconi may well be part of this tradition. On the other hand, we already stated that in medieval Jewish tradition, copying included in the majority of the cases also a reworking of the text. In Byzantium, this reworking could have been done by using classical texts.

What kind of value did the Hebrew paraphrase of Josephus's works have for the fourteenth-century Byzantine rabbi Yehuda Mosconi? Fortunately, he also tells us about his judgement of the book by quoting the Bible: "and its words were like honey" (Ez 3,3).⁶⁹ *Sefer Yosippon*'s authority is derived from its antiquity; it was written by Josephus and therefore older than the Mishna and Talmud.⁷⁰ For Mosconi, the book had several "purposes" (תועלות). Among them is the possibility of learning about the rulers of the world and their wicked behaviour.⁷¹ This reminds us of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos's use of Josephus: the excerpts from Josephus found in his "encyclopedia" show a special interest in the virtues and evils inherent in government. It has been suggested that Constantine considered Josephus's commentaries worthwhile because of their contemporary relevance.⁷² This may be

⁶⁶ W. Schmitt, "Lateinische Literatur in Byzanz," *JÖB* 17 (1968): 127–47.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁶⁸ H. Hunger, *Lesen und Schreiben in Byzanz* (München, 1989), 70f.

⁶⁹ Hominer, 37.

⁷⁰ Is it possible to discern here a critical tone towards those who were absorbed in the study of traditional Jewish sources?

⁷¹ Hominer, 37.

⁷² Bowman, "Josephus in Byzantium" (see note 7), 369f.

true as well for Mosconi. All these elements show the influence of the Byzantine literary culture on the production of Jewish historiography.

In addition, Mosconi emphasizes Josephus's credibility because he was an eyewitness to the events surrounding the Jewish War and the destruction of the Second Temple. The most important purpose of *Sefer Yosippon* is its provision of an opportunity for the Jewish people to read about the deeds of their ancestors, whose sins brought the catastrophe upon the Jewish people. Josephus wrote about fathers apostatizing and sinning, and as a result the Temple was destroyed. The didactic aim of *Sefer Yosippon* is to learn about the past in order to return the Jewish people to fulfilling God's commandments for the sake of salvation from exile. In Mosconi's mind the book helped the Jewish people in the Middle Ages to understand their situation (living in exile) and taught them appropriate religious behaviour.

On the other hand, it may as well be a polemical answer to the Christian interpretation of the destruction of the Temple and the Christian claim to be God's chosen people. Byzantine Christian writers referred specifically to Josephus in order to illustrate that the destruction of the Temple represented God's punishment of the Jews for killing Jesus and that the term *Verus Israel* is now bestowed upon themselves (the Christians).⁷³ Rewriting Josephus through excerpts or quotations as well as copying his manuscripts in Christian or Jewish literary society was part of the still ongoing struggle between the two religions about the legacy of the Bible.

VI. CONCLUSION

This article dealt with one of the first Hebrew historiographic works written by the Jews in the Middle Ages. *Sefer Yosippon*, the Hebrew reworking of Flavius Josephus's works, stems from tenth-century southern Italy, an area of merging Greek, Latin, and Jewish culture belonging to the Byzantine Empire. This proximity also led to controversies

⁷³ Bowman, "Josephus in Byzantium" (see note 7); R. Fishman-Duker, "The Works of Josephus as a Source for Byzantine Chronicles," in *Josephus Flavius. Historian of Eretz-Israel in the Hellenistic Roman Period*, ed., U. Rapaport (Jerusalem, 1982), 139–48 (Hebrew); Eadem, "The Second Temple Period in Byzantine Chronicles," *Byzantion* 47 (1977): 126–56.

and polemics. As a matter of fact, *Sefer Yosippon* counters Christian claims about Josephus, the Jewish Hellenistic writer of the end of the Second Temple period.

With regard to its diffusion in medieval Hebrew literature, *Sefer Yosippon* can be considered one of the best known texts not only in Byzantium, but in every region of Jewish culture. Rewritten again and again, it became an “open text.” This fact contradicts Yerushalmi’s argument that historiographical activity did not exist during the Middle Ages. Medieval Hebrew historiographical texts were often transmitted in various versions. An example for this activity in Byzantium is Yehuda Mosconi’s recension of *Sefer Yosippon*, which links Jewish tradition with classical Greek and Latin literature, returning the Jewish Hellenistic historian together with more literature from the Second Temple period into the realm of Jewish collective consciousness.

REFRACTING CHRISTIAN TRUTHS THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE BIBLICAL FEMALE IN BYZANTINE ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS

Mati Meyer

I. INTRODUCTION

Studying images of biblical women in Byzantine illuminated manuscripts raises the thorny question of how this subject could possibly be related to an investigation of the Jews in Byzantium—the current topic of this volume. Various reasons may clarify this conundrum.

The Scriptures had a prominent role in the lives of the Byzantines, who commanded an intimate knowledge of its characters. The Psalter is a case in point; read by men and women alike, this book was indisputably one of the most popular in the Byzantine world.¹ It was used as a reading primer² and served as an indispensable tool for the edification of both clergy and laymen, as the large number of extant illustrated and unillustrated copies attest. Thus, for example, bishops were expected to know the Psalter by heart in order to provide moral guidance for their parishioners.³ Chanting the psalms of David was part of the daily liturgy in Byzantine ritual, at least in Constantinople.⁴ The generally small dimensions of the surviving Psalters suggest that

¹ J. Lowden, "Observations on Illustrated Byzantine Psalters," *AB* 70/2 (1988): 242–60, esp. 247.

² A. Cutler, "The Aristocratic Psalter: The State of Research," *Actes du XV^e congrès international d'études byzantines*, I (Athens, 1979), 243. See also J. Lowden, "The Transmission of 'Visual Knowledge' in Byzantium through Illuminated Manuscripts: Approaches and Conjectures," in *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, eds., C. Holmes and J. Waring (Leiden, 2002), 59–80.

³ E.g., Canon II of the Second Council of Nicaea (787), trans. in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, XIV: *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 1st series, eds., P. Schaff et al. (Grand Rapids, 1974), 556: "Hence we decree that anyone who is about to be promoted to the rank of bishop shall by all means know the psalter."

⁴ J. Mateos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église. Ms. Sainte-Croix no. 40, X^e siècle*, I: *Le cycle des douze mois*; II: *Le cycle des fêtes mobiles*, OCA 165–166 (Rome, 1962–63). For the participation of women in the daily religious service see, A. Talbot, "The Devotional Life of Byzantine Laywomen: 850–1453," in *A People's History of Christianity*, III: *Byzantine Christianity*, ed. D. Krueger (Minneapolis, 2006), 201–20.

they were used when traveling, for private devotion at home, or for reading aloud in church. Illuminated Psalters sometimes precede the New Testament in the biblical canon, or complement it.⁵

Moreover, the eminent and sacred position of the *basileus* (emperor), who was considered sovereign by divine grace and choice, as well as the terrestrial representative of the celestial autocracy,⁶ was armored with impressive propaganda, propagated in particular by the panegyric literature that likened him to biblical figures such as David, Moses, and Solomon.⁷ The divine design and biblical-allegorical perception of the emperor was equally shared by the Byzantines, or the *Rhomaioi* (Romans) of Christian faith as they called themselves. Invoking the empire's fortune from the aegis of divine providence, they saw themselves as the "new Israel." At its apogee in the ninth–tenth centuries, the time frame of this study, the conception of the Byzantine people was more "biblical" than "Greek," as Cyril Mango put it.⁸

This political-imperial-allegorical vision joins the exegetical-typological approach—the *vetus testamentum in novo*—that was very popular with the church fathers of early Christianity. Accordingly, this method of interpretation collects, combines, and tailors Old Testament excerpts in order to sanction and elaborate Christian evangelism, catechesis, liturgy, and polemics, resulting in a perception of male and female biblical personages and events as prefigurations of figures and occurrences in Christianity.⁹

⁵ Lowden, "Observations," 249–50. On the study of the Bible by Byzantine laywomen as part of their religious practice, see Talbot, "Devotional Life," 201–20, esp. 203.

⁶ C. Mango, "Byzantinism and Romantic Hellenism," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965): 3; *Das byzantinische Herrscherbild*, ed. H. Hunger (Darmstadt, 1975); A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin* (Paris, 1936 [repr. London, 1971]); C. Jolivet-Lévy, "Présence et figures du souverain à Sainte-Sophie de Constantinople et à l'église de la Sainte-Croix d'Aghtamar," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed., H. Maguire (Washington, D.C. 1997), 231–46; P. Schreiner, "Charakteristische Aspekte der byzantinischen Hofkultur. Der Kaiserhof in Constantinopel," in *Höfische Kultur in Südosteuropa: Bericht der Kolloquien der Südosteuropa-Kommission 1988 bis 1990*, eds., R. Lauer and H. Majer (Göttingen, 1994), 18–9.

⁷ G. Dennis, "Imperial Panegyric: Rhetoric and Reality," in *Byzantine Court Culture*, 131–40.

⁸ Mango, "Byzantinism and Romantic Hellenism," 30–1.

⁹ J. Daniélou, *Études d'exégèse judéo-chrétienne* (Paris, 1958), with collected bibliography. For the Jewish testimony, see W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, 1997), esp. 117–212.

This typological approach was soon adopted by early Christian and early Byzantine artists in both monumental and small artistic media. By juxtaposing and pairing biblical events with those from the New Testament, numerous visual typological formulae and allegorical scenes were created to reflect Christian truths.¹⁰ After the Quinisext Council in Trullo (692), the allegorical approach was strictly banished from monumental paintings,¹¹ thereby exiling biblical iconography to a medium that might attract less public attention—the illuminated manuscript.¹²

In the following overview, which adopts an image-text analysis,¹³ I shall address a series of case studies that emerge from middle Byzantine illuminated manuscripts. Owing to my own interest in gender studies, the analysis will be made by examining prominent female figures of the Bible. Some questions will be raised regarding the ways in which these figures were cast to embody the Christian teachings held dear by post-iconoclastic advocates, and to what degree they had a polemical nature;¹⁴

¹⁰ See, e.g., A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins* (Princeton, 1968), 137–46; S. Schrenk, “Typos und Antitypos in der frühchristlichen Kunst,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 21 (1995): 90–107.

¹¹ On the prohibition of biblical depictions in church decoration, see Canon 82 of this council: “While embracing the ancient symbols and shadows [i.e., images of the Bible] inasmuch as they are signs and anticipatory tracings handed down to the Church, we give preference to the Grace and the Truth which we have received as the fulfillment of the Law.” (trans. in C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453. Sources and Documents* [Englewood Cliffs, 1972, repr. Toronto, 1986], 139).

¹² For the study of post-iconoclastic typological formulae, see, e.g., A. Cutler, “A Psalter from Mar Saba and the Evolution of the Byzantine David Cycle,” *Journal of Jewish Art* 6 (1979): 39–63; S. Dufrenne, “A propos de la naissance de David dans le Ms. 3 de Dumbarton Oaks,” *Travaux et mémoires* 8 (1981): 125–34; H. Maguire, “The Art of Comparing in Byzantium,” *Art Bulletin* 70/1 (1988): 88–103; M. Bernabò, “Adamo, gli animali, le sue vesti e la sfida di Satana: Un complesso rapporto testostimmagine nella illustrazione bizantina dei Settanta,” *Miniatura* 2 (1989): 11–33; L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium. Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, 1999), 147–200.

¹³ On this, see L. Brubaker, “The Relationship of Text and Image in the Byzantine Mss. of Cosmas Indicopleustes,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 70 (1977): 42–57; idem, “When Pictures Speak: the Incorporation of Dialogue in the Ninth-Century Miniatures of Paris gr. 510,” *Word and Image* 12/1 (1996): 94–108; K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992), 14–23.

¹⁴ Questions such as the contribution of rabbinic literature and Jewish art to the formation of early Christian art, or whether Christian works of art reflect current theological Christian-Jewish polemics, have been addressed extensively; see C. Nordström, “Some Jewish Legends in Byzantine Art,” *Byz* 25–27 (1955–57): 502–8; E. Revel-Neher, “Contribution des textes rabbiniques à l’étude de la Genèse de Vienne,” *Byzantion* 42 (1972): 115–30; idem, “Some Remarks on the Iconographical Sources of

for instance, how did Christian audiences in medieval Byzantium “read” the typological images, and what motivated the patrons of these manuscripts? It is hoped that addressing these questions may yield some cogent answers regarding the relationship between Byzantine Christians and the Jews.

II. THE MINIATURES IN THEIR CULTURAL SETTING

The time span of our study corresponds to what Paul Lemerle terms the “first Byzantine humanism,”¹⁵ an era marked by a revival of secular writings and a remarkable flourishing of Graeco-Roman studies, literature, education, and arts. Under the aegis of the Macedonian emperors, the intellectual elite, and the patriarchal schools of the capital, a group that remained very exclusive,¹⁶ this revival brought together laic and theological elements, blending pagan knowledge and Christian ideas. The recovery of one’s ancient heritage, the search for still available ancient manuscripts, and the methodical transcription of these texts into uncial script are the essential elements of the revival. Constantinople became a center of learning, study, and literature, attracting the best cultural forces of Europe at the time.¹⁷

the Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes,” *Kairos* 32–33 (1990–91): 78–97; K. Weitzmann, “The Study of Byzantine Book Illumination: Past, Present, and Future,” in *The Place of Book Illumination in Byzantine Art*, eds., K. Weitzmann et al., (Princeton, 1975), 1–60 (repr. *Byzantine Book Illumination and Ivories* [London, 1980]); K. Weitzmann and H. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 28 (Washington, D.C. 1990), 17–18; H. Schrekenberg and K. Schubert, *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity* (Assen, 1992); see particularly K. Schubert, “Jewish Pictorial Traditions in Early Christian Art,” in *Jewish Historiography and Iconography*, eds., Schrekenberg and Schubert, 189–260; H. Kessler, “Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity,” in *Studies in Pictorial Narrative*, ed., H. Kessler (London, 1994), 49–73. Yet, later studies greatly minimize the role of Jewish literary sources and late antique Jewish prototypes in the formation of Christian images; see, e.g., E. Revel-Neher, *Le témoignage de l’absence. Les objets du sanctuaire à Byzance et dans l’art juif du XI^e au XV^e siècles* (Paris, 1998). For doubting anti-Jewish polemics as an incentive for early Christian images, see particularly R. Stichel, “Gab es eine Illustration der jüdischen heiligen Schrift in der Antike?” in *Tesserae. Festschrift für Josef Engemann (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum)*, Supplement XVII (Münster, 1991).

¹⁵ P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin* (Paris, 1971).

¹⁶ R. Browning, “Byzantine Scholarship,” *Past and Present* 27 (1964): 3–22; P. Lemerle, “Le gouvernement des philosophes: notes et remarques sur l’enseignement, les écoles, la culture,” in *Cinq études sur le XI^e siècle byzantin*, ed., P. Lemerle (Paris, 1977), 195–248.

¹⁷ C. Mango, *Byzantium and Its Image: History and Culture of the Byzantine Empire and Its Heritage* (London, 1984).

The production of illuminated manuscripts, which flourished between the triumph of Orthodoxy (843) and the twelfth century, reaching its apogee at the end of the eleventh, was incontestably the height of contemporary artistic creation. Its essential characteristics were the reintroduction of the Graeco-Roman mode and the production of multiple copies of books.¹⁸ The Greek scribes did not sign their tomes, which makes their dating and place of production difficult to determine. However, it is clear that most of the illuminated manuscripts came from imperial or monastic *scriptoria* in Constantinople,¹⁹ where artists responsible for books of religious content worked side-by-side and were, of necessity, mutually influenced by those illustrating secular manuscripts.²⁰ As a result, their stylistic and iconographic sources resemble each other, indicating a dependence on more or less homogeneous pictorial traditions.

The manuscripts serving as the basis of this study are the Octateuchs, a Book of Kings,²¹ and Psalters. Six examples of the Octateuchs (lit., "eight books"), comprising the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, have survived.²² Their miniatures illustrate not only the biblical text,

¹⁸ Weitzmann, "Study of Byzantine Book Illumination," 3.

¹⁹ J. Irigoin, "Centres de copie et bibliothèques," in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen*, eds., I. Ševčenko and C. Mango, *Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium*, 1971 (Washington, D.C. 1975), 17–27; Lemerle, *Premier humanisme*, 122–28; A. Cutler, "The Social Status of Byzantine Scribes, 800–1500. A Statistical Analysis Based on Vogel-Gardthausen," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 74 (1981): 328–34.

²⁰ K. Weitzmann, "The Character and Intellectual Origins of the Macedonian Renaissance," in *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, eds. K. Weitzmann and H. Kessler (Chicago, 1971), 176–223 (English transl. of *Geistige Grundlagen und Wesen der Makedonischen Renaissance*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 107 [Cologne, 1963]); idem, "The Classical Mode in the Period of the Macedonian Emperors: Continuity or Revival?" in *Byzantina kai Metabyzantina*, I. *The 'Past' in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture*, ed., S. Vryonis (Malibu, 1978), 71–85 (repr. K. Weitzmann, *Classical Heritage in Byzantine and Near Eastern Art* [London, 1981]).

²¹ Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 333, Constantinople, ca. 1062 (hereafter: Vat. 333); J. Lassus, *L'illustration byzantine du Livre des Rois: Vaticanus graecus 333*, *Bibliothèque des cahiers archéologiques* 9 (Paris 1973).

²² The earliest non-illuminated example preserved is dated to the ninth–tenth centuries. The Cod. Plut. 5.38 (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 5.38, Constantinople, ca. 1050), has miniatures only as far as Genesis 3. The other illuminated Octateuchs are: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 747 (Olim 479), Constantinople, ca. 1071–1078 (hereafter: Vat. 747); Istanbul, Library of Topkapi Sarayı, cod. G.I.8 (Gayri İslami 8), Constantinople, ca. 1139–1152 (hereafter: Ser.); Smyrna, Evangelical School Library (Olim), cod. A.I, Constantinople, ca. 1150 (hereafter: Sm.); Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 746 (Olim 478), Constantinople, 1139–1152 (hereafter: Vat. 746); Mount Athos, Vatopedi Monastery, cod. 602 (Olim 515), Constantinople, ca. 1280 (hereafter: Vtp.); K. Weitzmann and M. Bernabò, *The*

but also the *catenae* (chains of exegetical commentaries on the biblical text) surrounding them.²³ This method, most probably devised in the late fifth or early sixth century,²⁴ was most likely introduced into illuminated manuscripts not before 800.²⁵ Numerous Psalters were also illuminated, primarily in monastic centers. The only one addressed in this study²⁶ presents marginal illustrations²⁷ featuring several small figures and narrative scenes that, like the *catenae*,²⁸ surround the text. When switching from one manuscript to another, whatever its genre, there are no apparent differences in the depiction of male and female figures. Furthermore, as we shall see, the female figures present a quasi-uniform character due to the use of traditional pictorial schemes; minor differences result from a particular artist's proclivities.

III. CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS VISUALIZED

A. *The Virginal Conception*

Leslie Brubaker has observed that "more than any other pictorial medium, miniatures speak to and for the same audience as do texts."²⁹ The image of Eve, and more specifically her nakedness, is a case in point, reflecting the way Byzantine art frequently tailors the biblical image by superposing both Christological and Jewish textual sources. In contrast to the Western approach, whereby Eve's nudity is con-

Illustrations in the Manuscripts of the Septuagint, II: *Octateuch* (Princeton, 1999), esp. 330–41.

²³ On the links between image and text, see more in M. Meyer, "On Birth and More in Middle Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts," *Cahiers archéologiques* 53 (2011): 49–62.

²⁴ R. Devreesse, *Les anciens commentateurs grecs de l'Octateuque et des Rois (fragments tirés des chaînes)*, Studi et Testi 201 (Vatican, 1959), vii–xv.

²⁵ Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 300, note 14.

²⁶ London, British Library, Ms Add.19 352, Constantinople, 1066 (hereafter: Theodore Psalter); S. Der Nersessian, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen-Âge*, II, *Londres, Add. 19.352*, Bibliothèque des cahiers archéologiques 5 (Paris, 1970); Anderson, "On the Nature of the Theodore Psalter," 55–68.

²⁷ L. Mariés, "Le psautier à illustration marginale. Signification théologique des images," *Actes du VI^e congrès international d'études byzantines*, II (Paris, 1951), 260–72; J. Anderson, "On the Nature of the Theodore Psalter," *Art Bulletin* 70 (1988): 55–68; Lowden, "Observations," 255–6.

²⁸ R. Devreesse, *Les commentaires patristiques du psautier (III^e–V^e siècles)*, OCA 219 (Rome, 1982); G. Dorival, "Aperçu sur l'histoire des chaînes exégétiques grecques sur le psautier (V^e–XIV^e siècles)," *Studia Patristica* 15 (1984): 146–69.

²⁹ Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 24.

demned through a distorted representation or an obvious association with Satan,³⁰ Byzantine manuscripts seem to valorize it.³¹

The favorable perception of Eve is rendered in the existing Octateuchs by a quasi-“ascetic” approach. For example, in the scene of the Fall (Gen. 3:1–6) illustrated in Ser., fol. 43v and Vat. 746, fol. 37v, Eve’s body resembles that of Adam, displaying—without any distortion or deformity—a compromise between Graeco-Roman corporeal volume and a slight “abstraction” of it; there is no suggestion of sexual organs (Fig. 1, color).³² The “quasi-ascetic” treatment denotes a concern to desexualize the female body by eliminating any features likely to suggest sex, passion, or the like.

Such a pictorial rendering is modised in the scene of the Denial of Guilt and the Punishments (Gen. 3:9–15), where Eve is endowed with female attributes (breasts, sometimes nipples), as can be seen in Vat. 747, fol. 23v (Fig. 2, color).³³ Adam and Eve, wearing foliated girdles, are trying to hide from God, who addresses them in the form of golden rays emanating from his hand in the heavenly segment above. Alternatively, the couple may be shown seated and facing each other on one or two small mounds, their hands covering their bodies in a *Venus pudica* pose. Eve’s prominent breasts are delicately modeled to emphasize their form (Fig. 3, color).³⁴

The key to the change in the pictorial approach is to be sought in the passage from the couple’s prelapsarian state (i.e., before the Fall of Man)—their spiritual identity with God, the Christological typology linked to the creation of the couple, and the absence of any sexual relations, as expressed in the numerous *catenae* that accompany the

³⁰ See, e.g., O. Werckmeister, “The Lintel Fragment Representing Eve from Saint-Lazare, Autun,” *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 35 (1972): 1–30; H. Kraus, “Eve and Mary: Conflicting Images of Medieval Woman,” in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, eds., N. Broude and M. Garrard (New York, 1982), 79–99; M. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston, 1989), esp. 85–117.

³¹ See M. Meyer, “Eve’s Nudity. A Sign of Shame or a Precursor of Christological Economy?” in *Between Judaism and Christianity. Art-Historical Essays in Honor of Elisheva (Elisabeth) Revel Neher*, eds., K. Kogman-Appel and M. Meyer (Leiden, 2009), 243–58.

³² Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 35, 36, and figs. 84 and 86, respectively.

³³ *Ibid.*, 37, fig. 91.

³⁴ Vat. 746, fol. 40v (*ibid.*, 36, fig. 90). For the miniatures of the same scene in Vat. 747, fol. 23v, Ser., fol. 46v, and Sm., fol. 13v, see *ibid.*, 36, figs. 87, 88, and 89, respectively. In Ser. and Vat. 746, the legend in the left margin of the miniature reads: φύλλα συκῆς ἔπρασαν εἰς σκέπην μόνα (“they sewed fig leaves to cover [their genitals]”).

miniatures³⁵—and the postlapsarian exegesis that places the emphasis on Eve's typological maternity. Being both Marian and sacramental, this maternity is analogous to one of the most fundamental Christian teachings—Mary's immaculate conception of Jesus.

The belief in the immaculate conception, impregnated with sanctity, innocence, and justice, is frequently reiterated by the early church fathers such as Justin (ca. 100–ca. 165),³⁶ Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 348/50–386/7),³⁷ Epiphanius (ca. 315–403),³⁸ and John of Damascus (ca. 676–ca. 753/4).³⁹ Furthermore, Mary's figure is depicted in contrast to the original sin and therefore enrobes a messianic interpretation,⁴⁰ which, according to Ephrem the Syrian (306–373), is the Annunciation of Mary's Son, Christ—He who will dominate the Adversary.⁴¹

Following the Christological interpretation of her creation from the rib of the sleeping Adam, Eve's importance is already firmly established in early Christianity; Adam's sleep corresponds not only to a prophetic ecstasy, but also to "the passion of Christ," as an anonymous exegetical chain fragment puts it.⁴² The creation of Eve is typologically taken to prefigure the birth of the Church emerging from the breast of the crucified Christ, an idea rendered in Byzantine art by a specific iconography in which Eve emerges from Adam's right side.⁴³ Since the figure of Eve represents the Church, she is also the one to bring forth the race of the regenerated and the faithful.⁴⁴ And so writes Didymos the Blind (ca. 313–398) in the *Octateuch catena* in connection with Eve's typological maternity: "Like Eve who brings forth with pain, the Church brings forth with pain, because virtue is costly and pain results

³⁵ Meyer, "Eve's Nudity," 248–50.

³⁶ Justin, *Dialog. cum Trypho*, 100 (PG 6:470).

³⁷ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 12, 29 (PG 33:761).

³⁸ Epiphanius, *Hæres.*, 78, 18 (PG 42/2:709D–711A).

³⁹ John of Damascus, *Or. in Nativ. Deip.*, II (PG 96/3:1452 B–C).

⁴⁰ See more on the perception of the immaculate perception as pertaining to Eve in Meyer, "Eve's Nudity," 253–4.

⁴¹ *Caverne V*, 7–9 (*Caverne des Trésors. Les deux recensions syriaques*, ed., R. Su-Min, CSCO 208 [Louvain, 1987], 16–8). See also M. Alexandre, *Le commencement du livre: Genèse I–IV. La version grecque de la Septante et sa réception*, *Christianisme antique* 3 (Paris, 1988), 314–5; M. Harl et al., *La Bible d'Alexandrie*, I: *La Genèse*, (Paris, 1986), 109.

⁴² G 1170; *La chaîne sur la Genèse. Édition intégrale*, ed. F. Petit, 4 vols. (Louvain, 1991–1996), I, 172 (hereafter: Petit, *La chaîne*).

⁴³ Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 32–3, notes 4 and 6.

⁴⁴ J. Daniélou, *Sacramentum futuri: Études sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris, 1950), 37–44, esp. 38.

in an irrevocable conversion for the sake of salvation.”⁴⁵ Eve’s role in the economy of salvation is further articulated, succinctly yet eloquently, in a fragmentary chain on Gen. 3:20 attributed to Theodoret of Chyrrus (ca. 393–ca. 466): “Eve is the Church and Adam is Christ, and they give life as Christ gives the life of grace.”⁴⁶

Sarah is another female biblical figure that, according to the typological approach, conveys the idea of Marian conception. Yet, unlike Eve, her portrayal also embodies the virginal-spiritual aspect. The early Christian pictorial tradition of the *philoxenia* (Gen. 18:1–22) represents Sarah, advanced in age, standing at the entrance to a small edifice (per Gen. 18:10) and listening to the conversation between the “three men”⁴⁷ and her husband, wherein Abraham is promised that, although barren and well beyond childbearing age, his wife will bear a son.

Some of the post-iconoclastic images deviate from the traditional depiction of Sarah. From a high window, she looks down on the scene of the winged, gold-nimbed guests seated around a table set with three gold cups, while Abraham, wearing a gold nimbus, hastens to the table carrying a gold bowl in his hands. Sarah is partially hidden behind a blue curtain that she has drawn aside; her head is slightly inclined, seemingly to better grasp the conversation between her husband and his guests (Fig. 4, color).⁴⁸

The new image of Sarah at the window seems to nullify the traditional typological identification of the tent’s doorway with the Christological interpretation of the door in John 10:9 (“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved”).⁴⁹ Yet, as we shall see, the divergence from the early Christian formula was most probably intended to

⁴⁵ G 409 (Petit, *La chaîne*, I, 269).

⁴⁶ G 435 (ibid., 281–2).

⁴⁷ The visit at Mamre was interpreted as a prefiguration of Christ in his human form, accompanied by angels (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. Bapt.* XII, 16 [PG 33:743 A]; Origen, *Comm. in Epist. ad Rom.* X, 8, 2 [PG 14:1278 B]) and Abraham’s hospitality as an allegory of the Trinity (Cyril of Jerusalem [G 1053; Petit, *La chaîne*, III, 12–28, 107–8).

⁴⁸ Ser., fol. 78r (Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 76, fig. 258). For additional images, see Vat. 747, fol. 39r; Sm., fol. 30r or 30v; Vat. 746, fol. 72r (ibid., 76–77, figs. 257, 259–260). For the iconography of the *Philoxenia* in post-iconoclastic Psalters retaining the traditional early Christian depiction of Sarah at the entrance of the tent, see M. Meyer, “The Window of Testimony: A Sign of Physical or Spiritual Conception?” in *Interactions. Artistic Interchange between the Eastern and Western Worlds in the Medieval Period*, ed., C. Hourihane (Philadelphia, 2007), 247–8.

⁴⁹ Authorized version. For this interpretation, see W. Braunfels, *Die heilige Dreifaltigkeit* (Düsseldorf, 1954), XVIII.

convey Christian ideas connected with the Virgin Mary. This hypothesis may be confirmed by Sarah's portrayal as a young woman, and the transformation of the door into a window with a curtain.

In contrast to Gen. 18:11, where we are told that Sarah was "advanced in days, and the custom of women ceased with [her]," the images depict Sarah as a young woman whereas Abraham appears as an old, grey-haired, slightly hunchbacked man, bespeaking his biblical age. Sarah's youthfulness may well convey an extended typological approach, beginning with the Annunciation: ὅτι οὐκ ἀδυνατήσῃ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ πᾶν ῥῆμα ("Is anything too hard for the Lord?"—Luke 1:37), where Gabriel's answer to the question of the bewildered Virgin echoes the divine response to Sarah that she will conceive: μὴ ἀδυνατεῖ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ πᾶν ῥῆμα ("Shall anything be impossible with the Lord?"—Gen. 18:14).⁵⁰

Indeed, the Annunciation account and the typology that renders Isaac as the prefiguration of Christ,⁵¹ suggest an analogy between Sarah and Mary. The Christological notion was further developed by other church fathers, such as Cyril of Jerusalem, who points out that Abraham's advanced age did not allow him to procreate; therefore Isaac's conception was miraculous and analogous to that of Christ, thereby drawing a parallel between Sarah's impregnation and Mary's miraculous conception.⁵² Origen (185–254) further confirms the spiritual dimension of Sarah's conception,⁵³ maintaining that not only was she unable to bear a child, but she was also devoid of desire.⁵⁴ Therefore, Sarah's portrayal as a young woman may well be purposely designed to

⁵⁰ All biblical passages are cited from the Septuagint version unless otherwise stated; see L. Brenton, ed., *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, 9th ed. (Peabody, 2001).

⁵¹ H. von Erffa, *Ikonologie der Genesis. Die christlichen Bildthemen aus dem Alten Testament und ihre Quellen* (Munich, 1995), 95.

⁵² *Catech. V.5 (Catéchèse baptismale*, eds., J. Bouvet and A.-G. Hamman [Paris, 1993], 87). For discussion of this theme, see L. Legrand, "Fécondité virginale selon l'Esprit dans le nouveau Testament," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 84 (1962): 785–805; R. Neff, "The Pattern of Annunciation in the Birth Narratives," (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1969); idem, "The Birth and Election of Isaac in the Priestly Tradition," *Biblical Research* 15 (1970): 5–18; P. Grelot, "La naissance d'Isaac et celle de Jésus," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 94 (1972): 463–77.

⁵³ In a contemporary midrash, Sarah's miraculous impregnation is equally perceived as a divine reward for her humility and deep faith; *GenR* 45, 10 (*Genesis Rabbah. The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis*, II, trans. J. Neusner [Atlanta, 1985], 155).

⁵⁴ Origen, *Rom. Com.* VII, 15, 2 (*Origen. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans Books 6–10*, trans. T. Scheck [Washington, D.C. 2002], 111–2).

illustrate her typological association with the Virgin and, more specifically, as a young maiden at the moment of the Annunciation,⁵⁵ similar to Mary's usual appearance in contemporary Byzantine art.⁵⁶

Furthermore, Sarah's position at the window, with its partially drawn curtain, confers on her the prophetic dimension traditionally ascribed to Old Testament figures.⁵⁷ Both elements are perceived in a sacramental-liturgical perspective, conveying the notion of Christ's Incarnation.⁵⁸ When taken together, all these meanings render Sarah as the biblical figure prophesying and authenticating the Incarnation of Christ.⁵⁹ It is therefore suggested that the curtain of the window framing Sarah (analogous to the Incarnation) is partially lifted by the young woman (recalling the figure of Mary) in order to grasp the Logos better and receive the divine word that will lead to her miraculous conception.

The figure of Bathsheba is a third rib supporting the notion of the Christian mystery of the Annunciation and spiritual conception. She appears at the window in the scene where David is rebuked by the prophet Nathan, which bears the legend from Ps. 50(51): "a Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, when he had gone in to Bersabee"; one would expect this scene to illustrate 2 Kings 11:2-4, where Bathsheba becomes the object of David's desire.

⁵⁵ Meyer, "Window of Testimony," 253.

⁵⁶ Cf. the well-known twelfth-century icon from Sinai (K. Weitzmann, "Eine spät-kommenische Verkündigungssikone des Sinai und die zweite byzantinische Welle des 12. Jahrhunderts," in *Festschrift für Herbert von Einem*, eds., G. von der Osten and G. Kauffmann (Berlin, 1965), 299-312 (repr. in idem, *Studies in the Arts at Sinai. Essays* (Princeton, 1982); idem, *The Icon. Holy Images—Sixth to Fourteenth Century* (New York, 1978), 92, pl. 27.

⁵⁷ Origen, *Ct. Hom.* III, 14 (PG 13:183 C-D); Origen: *The Song of Songs. Commentary and Homilies*, trans. R. Lawson (Westminster, 1957), 235.

⁵⁸ For the veil prefiguring Christ's Incarnation, see, e.g., Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 375-444), *Quod unus sit Christus* (PG 75:1253 A-B). On this, see also H. Papastavrou, "Le voile, symbole de l'Incarnation. Contribution à une étude sémantique," *Cahiers archéologiques* 40 (1992): 141. For the veil being specifically associated with the divine revelation, which developed into a constant component of the Byzantine church ritual, see T. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople, Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, 1971), 162-71; R. Taft, *A History of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, II: The Great Entrance, A History of the Transfer of Gifts and other Pre-anaphoral Rites* (Rome, 1978), 209-10, 244-9.

⁵⁹ See Meyer, "Window of Testimony," 257-8.

The more or less consistent iconographic scheme is best exemplified in the Theodore Psalter, fol. 63v (Fig. 5, color).⁶⁰ King David, clad and shod in full Byzantine imperial regalia, is seated on a chair before the nimbed figure of Nathan, who reprimands him. Behind the king stands an angel, sword brandished upward in the direction of Bathsheba, who wears a sumptuous contemporary dress and a crown and watches them from above, from a window with a conch-shaped roof. All three figures, and the window structure, are framed by a conch-shaped dome resting on two columns ending in gold capitals; a curtain is draped over the left column.

Eastern exegetes such as Origen, Athanasios, and Didymos the Blind,⁶¹ interpret Psalm 50(51) as the repentance psalm par excellence and David's repentance following Nathan's rebuke as a lesson of virtue for humanity.⁶² Following the David-Christ link established in Matt. 5:20, 20:30, Christian thinkers view the messianic figure of David as the most important of the *figura Domini*.⁶³ Ambrose (ca. 340–397), on the other hand, justifies David's adultery, arguing that Bathsheba, united with David, symbolizes the people of the Nations, the Church united with Christ.⁶⁴ The act was legitimized by God since it testifies to the abolition of the ancient alliance and the advent of the new

⁶⁰ Ps 50:1–3 (51:1–3); Der Nersessian, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs*, 32, fig. 102, accompanied by the legend ὁ Δα(υὶ)δ ἐλεγχόμε(νος), Δα(υὶ)δ κλαί(ων) ("David rebuked, David weeping"). The folio represents two additional scenes: King David in the *proskynesis* posture, and Uriah's corpse lying before the walled city of Rabbah (2 Kings 11:16–17). For a discussion of the scene in other contemporary illuminated Psalters, see the author's, "L'image de la femme biblique dans les manuscrits byzantins enluminés de la dynastie macédonienne (867–1056)," (unpublished PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001), 283–98.

⁶¹ The commentaries of Origen and Didymos have survived in fragmentary form as part of the Greek *catenae* to the Psalms; they were later developed by Ambrose in his *Apology of David* (P. Hadot, "Une source de l'*Apologia David* d'Ambroise: les commentaires de Didyme et d'Origène sur le psaume 50," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 60 [1976], 205–25; *Ambroise, Apologie de David*, annot. and trans. P. Hadot and M. Cordier, SC 239 [Paris, 1977], 9–16; Appendice I, 49–57.

⁶² Ambrose, *Apol. David* 7 (*Ambroise, Apologie*, 78–81). For the Cappadocian fathers as well, David is the figure of repentance par excellence (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or. XIV* [PG 35:861 A]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Melet. Episc. Or. fun.* [PG 46:857 C; 45:1017 D]).

⁶³ J. Daniélou, "David," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, III (1957), cols. 593–602.

⁶⁴ Ambrose, *Apol. David* 14 (*Ambroise, Apologie*, 90–91); idem, *Expositio Evang. Secundum Lucam*, III, 36, 38 (*Traité sur l'Évangile de saint Luc*, ed., G. Tissot, SC 45 [Paris, 1971], 140–1). It should be kept in mind that Ambrose bases his arguments on Origen's exegesis of Psalm 50(51). Therefore, in view of the close ties between Origen and the rabbinical authorities in third-century Caesarea, an influence of the Jewish

one.⁶⁵ Ambrose also contends that Bathsheba represents the point of departure “according to the flesh,”⁶⁶ personifying the human nature of Christ.⁶⁷ David’s sin of the flesh, therefore, is a prefiguration of the human nature of Christ and, more precisely, of the mystery of his Incarnation.⁶⁸

Two iconographic elements—the angel and the conch—form the typological meaning of Bathsheba in the Byzantine Psalters as a prefiguration of the Annunciation. The presence of the angel, which is not mentioned in the Septuagint (2 Kings 12:9–10), may be sought in the *Palaea Historica*, a ninth-century compilation containing a narrative of events from Creation to Daniel based on paraphrased and apocryphal versions of biblical episodes and augmented by passages from various Eastern Christian writers.⁶⁹ The text tells us that the angel turned his sword away from David’s body at the moment of his repentance,⁷⁰ and this is what can be seen in our miniature.

The angel’s peculiar posture, turning toward Bathsheba and pointing his sword at her while he looks at David, establishes not only his biblical role as a reminder of the sin and its cause, but also causes him to resolve the drama; he acts here as a divine intermediary, uniting man and woman in a sacred bond. In fact, Bathsheba’s rich and sumptuous apparel and David’s imperial garb portray them as a married couple.

Furthermore, the angel approaching Bathsheba from the left is an iconographic formula reserved for the Annunciation in early Christian

midrash is not to be excluded (N. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-century Palestine* [Cambridge, 1976], 23–8).

⁶⁵ Ambrose, *Apol. David* 18.

⁶⁶ Idem, *Expositio Evang. Secundum Lucam*, III, 39 (*Traité sur l’Évangile de saint Luc*, 142).

⁶⁷ One gets a clearer idea of what exactly “the human nature of Christ” means in theological thought from the eloquent sayings of Epiphanius the Deacon included in a speech delivered in the Sixth Act or Session of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicea, 4 October, 787: “Thus for us the expression ‘according to the flesh’ means the state of sin; and the expression ‘not according to the flesh’ means the state without sin. With regard to Christ, however, the expression ‘according to the flesh’ means the state of the passions of [human] nature, that is of thirst, hunger, fatigue, sleep.” (D. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm* [Toronto, 1986], 113).

⁶⁸ Ambrose, *Apol. David* 20–22 (*Ambroise, Apologie*, 96–101). On the Incarnation, see Ambrose, *Apol. David*, 19–20.

⁶⁹ XLII–LVI (*Anecdota Graeco-Byzantina*, ed., A. Vassiliev, I. *Uchenyia Zapiski Imperatorskago Moskovskago Universiteta, Otdiel Istoriko-filologicheskii II* [Moscow, 1893], 188–92).

⁷⁰ Cutler, “Aristocratic Psalter,” 248, note 47.

and Byzantine art.⁷¹ The association of the scene with Marian images of the Annunciation, and consequently of the ensuing allegorical-virginal conception of Bathsheba, is also supported by the motif of the conch appearing as an architectural element. In early Christianity, the conch bore a sacred meaning, as, for example, when Athanasios formulated the allegory of the miraculous conception of the Virgin, paralleling her to the shell holding Christ-God in her womb.⁷² The persistence of this allegory in Byzantine thought is attested later, for example, in the eighth homily of Photios (ca. 810–ca. 893), who reproved the Jews' refusal to accept the Christian faith.⁷³ The presence of the conch as an architectural element is also closely linked to the elaborate structure behind the seated Virgin with the child-Christ in the scene of the Adoration of the Magi located in the Armenian Ejniatsin gospels dated to 989.⁷⁴ Thus, the presence of Bathsheba in the scene of David's repentance, which also features an angel, may be understood as a typological allusion to the Annunciation, following David's spiritual marriage to Bathsheba.

Lastly, the evolution of the scene in the imperial realm points to the Byzantine iconography that, from the ninth century onward, frequently associates the figure of the emperor with David,⁷⁵ alluding to the ceremonies taking place in the royal court, where the emperor was regularly called "the New David."⁷⁶

⁷¹ Cf. the sixth-century cathedra of Maximian (W. Volbach and M. Hirmer, *Frühchristliche Kunst: Die Kunst der Spätantike in Westund Ostrom* [Munich, 1958], 8–9, pl. 231). On the Annunciation from the left, see D. Denny, "The Annunciation from the Right," (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of New York, 1965), 8–11, 14–21.

⁷² Athanasios, *Quaest. Allae* XIX (PG 28:790 D–791 A/C).

⁷³ VIII, 3 (*The Homilies of Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople*, trans. and comm. C. Mango, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 3 [Cambridge, 1958], 155).

⁷⁴ Erevan, Matenadaran MS 2734, fol. 228r (J. Lowden, "The Beginnings of Biblical Illustrations," in *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, ed., J. Williams [University Park, 1999], 37–8, fig. 17).

⁷⁵ Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 185–6.

⁷⁶ The Book of Ceremonies describes the factions acclaiming the emperor and calling him David during the chariot races held in the hippodrome at the end of the Carnival (*De Cer.* II, 82 [73] [*Constantin Porphyrogénète, Le livre des Cérémonies*, ed., A. Vogt, 2 vols. [Paris, 1935–39], II, 167]). Actually, the Byzantine emperor and David are associated in various texts as early as the fifth-century (F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy, Origins and Background*, I [Washington, D.C. 1966], 781, 784, 789, and 797).

B. Christological Genealogy

The portrayal of these biblical figures giving birth is consistent with the artistic approach adopted above, i.e., to advance the argument that their virginal conception confers on the images a sacred meaning. The birth of their sons imitates what came to be called the “painless birth,” and is associated with the Nativity scene;⁷⁷ such is, for example, the well-known Nativity scene in the sixth-century ivory from the Maximian cathedra in Ravenna, where the Virgin, fully clothed and shod, is lying on a couch.⁷⁸ The iconography depicts the mother—Sarah or Bathsheba⁷⁹—in the postpartum phase;⁸⁰ she is fully clothed and leans on a large cushion placed on a bed in front of a conventional building, designating the interior of the house. The naked newborn wears a gold halo and is being bathed for the first time by the midwife. Sarah’s advanced age is evident in her facial features (Fig. 6, color).⁸¹

Both infants—Isaac and Solomon—were begotten by divine promise and both are cardinal links in the genealogy of Christ,⁸² as is written in Matt. 1:1–2, 6: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son

⁷⁷ J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la vierge dans l'empire byzantin et en occident*, I [Bruxelles, 1964], 89–121, esp. 93, note 2; Weitzmann-Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 308). One has to acknowledge the fact that this type of birthing is based on Graeco-Roman models, as can be seen in the partially damaged fifth-century floor mosaic from Nea Paphos (Cyprus) representing the birth of Achilles (K. Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, exhibition catalogue [New York, 1979], 237–8; fig. 213). And see P. Nordhagen, who argues that it was specifically the birth of Dionysos that inspired the Christian artist when modeling the Nativity (“The Origin of the Washing of the Child in the Nativity Scene,” in *Studies in Byzantine and Early Medieval Painting*, ed., P. Nordhagen [London, 1990], 326–31).

⁷⁸ W. Volbach, *Early Christian Art* (New York, n.d.), pls. 103–5.

⁷⁹ Unlike Isaac and Solomon, whose births are depicted in the manuscripts, those of Eve’s sons, Cain and Abel, are not shown. Instead, the artists portrayed Eve’s visible pregnancy in the Lamentation scene (Gen. 3:24), after Adam had known her, and as noted in the legend accompanying the miniature: γνῶσις τέκνων τόκος (knowledge; engenderment of children). See, e.g., Vat. 746, fol. 44r (Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 42, fig. 102).

⁸⁰ See M. Meyer, “On the Hypothetical Model of the Iconography of Birth-giving in the Octateuchs,” *Deltion tes Christianikes Archaialogikes Etaireias* 26 (2005): 315–7.

⁸¹ Vat. 746, fol. 79r (Weitzmann-Bernabò, *Octateuch*, fig. 291). See also the miniatures in Vat. 747, fol. 42r; Sm., fol. 33v (ibid., 82, figs. 289–90). Sm. and Vat. 746 bear the inscription: ἡ τοῦ ἰσαὰκ ἐκ σάρρας ἀπότειξις (“Sarah giving birth to Isaac”).

⁸² For a discussion of other biblical heroes (Moses, David, and Samson) begotten of divine promise and born under mysterious circumstances, thereby showing parallels with the birth of Jesus, see Meyer, “L’image de la femme biblique,” 130–42, and 155–9.

of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac... and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.”

Sarah's singularity was not lost on the Christians; she was the only one to hear the divine word, the ultimate proof that the old woman, long past the age of conception and considered barren, would indeed conceive. This is articulated in Gal. 4:22–28, and especially v. 23, which advances the argument that the Christians, and not the Jews, are the children promised to Abraham.⁸³

The idea that Sarah was the ancestor of the Christians,⁸⁴ and that her son Isaac—*typus Domini* and figure of the Incarnation—would establish the Christian Church and ensure his posterity in Christ, as declared, for example, by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215),⁸⁵ is firmly connected to the dichotomy of promise/flesh and freewoman/bondmaid. Origen adds that Isaac was not begotten by a corporeal birth—since Abraham's body and Sarah's womb were already considered dead—but as an outcome of the arrival and discourse of God.⁸⁶ Eusebios of Caesaria (ca. 260–ca. 340), for his part, discusses the theme of birth by the flesh as opposed to birth by grace, and vigorously juxtaposes the flesh (Hagar) with the spirit (Sarah): “the union of Abraham with the bondmaid was for the purpose of the generation of children, and the union with the legitimate wife was that of the soul in harmony with the celestial desire.”⁸⁷

Pertinent to the “sacred” portrayal of Isaac's birth is that of Ishmael (Gen. 16:15), conceived in relatively bold and “realistic” terms and depicting the physical, prepartum phase;⁸⁸ Hagar, wearing only a short tunic and facing front, is seated on a bench, her legs wide apart, pressing one hand against her belly and the other on the midwife's

⁸³ For the typological meaning of the contrasting figures of Sarah and Hagar, see G. Bouwman, “Die Hagar- und Sara-Perikope (Gal. 4, 21–31): exemplarische Interpretation zum Schriftbeweis bei Paulus,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II/25.4 (1987): 3144. See also, Harl et al., *La Genèse*, 58–9.

⁸⁴ Origen, *Hom. in Gen.* VI, 6 (*Homilies in Genesis and Exodus*, trans. R. Heine [Washington, D.C. 1982], 125).

⁸⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* I, 5, 30, 3–31, 2–3 (PG 8:717 A–724 A).

⁸⁶ Origen, *Rom. Com.* VII, 15, 2 (*Origen. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans Books 6–10*, trans. T. Scheck [Washington, D.C. 2002], 111–2).

⁸⁷ G 994 (Petit, *La chaîne*, III, 76).

⁸⁸ In this regard, see M. Meyer, “Woman to Woman: Parturient-Midwife Imagery in Byzantine Art,” *Bizantinistica* 6 (2004): 101–19; ideam, “Hypothetical Model of Birth-giving,” 311–8.

head; both gestures indicate her labor pains; the infant is “plunging forward,” head first, between his mother’s legs (Fig. 7, color).⁸⁹

The Christian argument that Ishmael was conceived by the carnal union of Abraham and Hagar (therefore according to “the flesh,” as opposed to Isaac, who was conceived according to “the spirit”)⁹⁰ appears to be confirmed by the scene in the upper register in the same miniature, where Sarah is shown taking Hagar’s hand and leading her into Abraham’s chamber with the prospect of giving him a son. The implications of this gesture, leading to the sexual act⁹¹ and conception, and enhanced by the realism of the childbearing, leaves no doubt as to the implied carnal meaning of Ishmael’s birth. It is totally at odds with Isaac’s birth scene, which emulates the Nativity and therefore bears Marian parallels, demonstrating that the artist deliberately omitted any hint of the physical act of delivery. Hagar is thus represented as embodying a birthing before the “true” one—Sarah. Hagar gives birth to the Synagogue, whereas Sarah announces the birth of the Christian assembly.

The annunciation of Solomon’s birth echoes that of Isaac. Like Isaac, he, too, is part of the messianic lineage (2 Kings 7:12–16).⁹² It is not surprising, then, to find Bathsheba in Christ’s genealogy (Matt. 1:6), where she represents the starting point of His human ancestry. From the vantage point of the New Testament, Origen pronounced Solomon a type of Christ.⁹³ The promise of Christian salvation, the Parousia (the Second Coming of Christ), and the founding of the eternal kingdom are therefore foreshadowed in the messianic figures of David and his

⁸⁹ Vat. 747, fol. 37v (Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 73, fig. 240). See also Sm., fol. 29v and Vat. 746, fol. 71r (ibid., figs. 242–44]). The illustration in Vat. 746 bears the legend: ἡ τοῦ ἰσμαὴλ γέννησις (“Birth of Ishmael”).

⁹⁰ On the characterization of biblical figures “born in spirit” and “born in flesh,” see more in Meyer, “On Birth and More,” 49–62.

⁹¹ M. Meyer, “The Levite’s Concubine: Imaging the Marginal Woman in Byzantine Society,” *Studies in Iconography* 26 (2006): 62.

⁹² The Christian exegetes sought in the divine promise made to David and in Psalms 2:23 (24):10, 71 (72):8–11, and 131 (132):11 (which evoke the same ideas) proof for the royal coming of Christ, foretold in the figure of Solomon (Justin, *Dial. cum Trypho* XXXIV, 1–8; XXXVI, 6; LXIV, 5–6 (*Justin Martyr. The Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Lukin A. William [London, 1930], 65–8, 73, and 134–5, respectively); Eusebios, *Dem. Evang.* VII, 3, 21, 52, *Eusebius Werke*, VI, ed., I. Heikel, GCS 23 [Leipzig, 1913], 341, lines 7–1; 346, lines 19–27]).

⁹³ Origen, *Ct. Com.* prol. (ed., W. Baehrens, GCS 33 [Leipzig, 1925], 84, lines 2–12). For additional exegetical sources on the Christological typology of Solomon, see Meyer, “L’image de la femme biblique,” 159–60.

son.⁹⁴ The birth of Solomon (2 Kings 12:24) is depicted in a similar “Christianized” iconography, devoid of any hint of a physical nature (Fig. 8, color).⁹⁵ Bathsheba, wearing a long dress and covered with a *maphorion*, is looking at the scene where two women—the midwife and her assistant—bathe the gold-haloed naked infant. The adoption of the postpartum formula is necessary in order to emphasize the miraculous birth of the biblical hero, which typologically refers to the virginal conception and divine birth of Jesus.

Christ’s genealogy is not biological and bears a rather mysterious character. He is Abraham’s son, born of Isaac, linked to Phares, and, through him, to the house of David and Solomon. Yet, David is, in fact, only the forefather of Joseph, who has not consummated his marriage to Mary. Therefore, the inclusion of Solomon in the genealogy was likely to cause some difficulty, but Theodoret of Cyrrihus’s comment reconciles the apparent contradiction:

God wanting to constitute the race of Israel, this shows that it enjoyed a multiple descendance, not according to natural laws, but according to grace. This race received a share of the divine solicitude, because Christ, the Lord, the only son of God, was to be born from it according to the flesh.⁹⁶

Christian salvation is translated not only through the “painless birth” of the mother, but also by the scene of the bathing of the gold-nimbed newborn, an image charged with baptismal significance.⁹⁷ Immersion in the baptismal pool was understood by the Church as the descent into the waters of death and the ascent from it as a rebirth, identical to Christ’s descent into the waters of the Jordan during his baptism.⁹⁸ It symbolizes the purification of one’s sins and communion with the Holy Spirit, restoring to man the Christian grace, which is equivalent

⁹⁴ Justin, *Dial. cum Trypho* XXXVI, 6 (Justin Martyr, 73); Eusebios of Caesarea, *Dem. Evang.* VII.3.52 (Eusebius Werke, VI, 346, 19–27).

⁹⁵ Vat. 333, fol. 51v (Lassus, *Livre des Rois*, 75, fig. 93).

⁹⁶ Theodoret, *Quaest. in Gen.* LXXV (PG 80:185).

⁹⁷ A. Hermann, “Das erste Bad des Heilands und des Helden in spätantiken Kunst und Legende,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 10 (1967): 81.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Origen, *Mat. Com.* XIII, 28 (Origenes Werke, X–XII, ed., E. Klosterman, GCS 40 [Leipzig, 1935], 256, line 5). On the newborn first bath and its baptismal aspects, see also E. Kitzinger, “The Hellenistic Heritage in Byzantine Art,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963): 103–4.

to a second birth.⁹⁹ In Isaac's case, the significance of the baptism is twofold since his bath is shown side-by-side with his circumcision. For Cyril of Alexandria, the latter is a symbol of the baptism: "We know indeed that the circumcision of the flesh, which has long been a symbol, is represented in the birth according to the flesh by the rejection of the foreskin, making of those who were circumcised sons of God."¹⁰⁰

The biblical mothers and their respective progeny fulfill a typological role in the manuscripts that is prescribed by Eastern Christian thought. They form part of the biblical group whose lineage, promised by God, extends to Christ. Their childbearing prefigures the mysterious birth of Christ following the divine Annunciation. Therefore, they act not only as the typological figure of Christ, but also as forbears of the messianic message of the Christian salvation to come at the end of time.

C. *Christian Superiority*

The discussion of the fraternal Ishmael-Isaac pair suggests yet another theme—the firstborn-cadet (rejected-chosen) motif. Repeated time and again in patristic texts, it leads to the notion of Christianity's superiority over Judaism. As we have seen, the idea evoked earlier by the author of the Epistle to Galatians (4:22–26) is rendered by contrasting birth iconographies. The figures of Sarah and Hagar represent two alliances (Gal. 4:24) that also juxtapose their corresponding sons. Hagar, who comes from Sinai where Moses received the Law, conceives in servitude; Sarah, a free woman who comes from heavenly Jerusalem, conceives Isaac, and so his sons are born in the freedom of grace and not in the slavery of the ancient Law (Gal. 4:25–31). The midrashic approach, which contrasts the savage and murderous Ishmael¹⁰¹ with Isaac, son of the divine promise with whom God will establish His covenant,¹⁰² is adopted by Origen in his commentary on Gal. 4:22.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Origen, *Luc. Hom.* XXVIII, 1–2 (*Origène, Homélie sur saint Luc*, eds., H. Crouzel, F. Fournier and P. Perichon, SC 87 [Paris, 1962], 356–7, notes 1–2).

¹⁰⁰ G 1200 (Petit, *La chaîne*, III, 187–8).

¹⁰¹ פֶּרֶא אִדָּם, "He shall be a wildass of a man... a wildass of a man is meant literally, for most people plunder property, but he plundered lives" (*GenR* 45, 9 [*Genesis Rabbah*, II, 154]).

¹⁰² *GenR* 47, 5 (*ibid.*, 171).

¹⁰³ Origen, *Num. Hom.* XI, 1,10 (trans. from *Origène, Homélie sur les Nombres*, ed., L. Doutreleau, SC 442 [Paris, 1999], 20–2). See also Origen, *Cels* IV, 4, 4 (*Origène, Contre Celse*, ed., M. Borret, SC 138 [Paris, 1968], 298–9); *Rom. Com.* IV (PG 14:983

Eusebios of Caesarea argues along the same lines, claiming that the Christians are the rightful heirs of Abraham's divine promise and that Isaac "is exhibited as the successor both to his father's knowledge of God and to divine favor" and therefore is the Chosen One.¹⁰⁴ Diodoros of Tarsus (d. ca. 390) confirms this notion and makes Ishmael the figure of the Jews and Isaac that of the Christians.¹⁰⁵

Replacing the older with the younger is repeated in two other pairs of brothers prefiguring the genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1:2–3)—Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:24–26) and Phares and Zara (Gen. 38:29–30)—who are implicitly linked to the idea of the two covenants. The *in utero* movements of Esau and Jacob ("And the babes leaped within her"—Gen. 25:22), interpreted in rabbinic commentaries as attempts to kill each other,¹⁰⁶ are the first hint of the struggle for dominance. The younger figure's supremacy over the elder appears in the divine announcement to Rebecca, who learns that her children will generate two different "peoples" and "nations." Being a negative, wicked, and excessive man, Esau will be supplanted and dominated by his younger brother, Jacob, who is just and righteous.¹⁰⁷

The New Testament follows the paradigm of the younger brother being loved by God.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, Christian exegesis relegates the older Esau to a secondary place. Origen articulates this most eloquently:

Those who are not first-born by birth, are thus raised to the rank of first-born. [...] Does this not teach us that those who are held for first-born before God, are not those who are first-born in terms of bodily birth but those of whom God has recognized the spiritual disposition, deciding therefore to raise them to the rank of first-born? It was thus, by a divine decision, that Jacob, the younger, became the first-born and received the blessings attached to the right of seniority.¹⁰⁹

A–C; 1142 B); *Ier. Hom.* I, 5; 20, 6 (*Homélie sur Jérémie*, ed., P. Nautin, SC 232 [Paris, 1976], 202–3, 276–7). A similar idea is repeated by Ambrose of Milan, *Apol. David* 11 (*Ambrose. Apologie*, 86–87), and Didymos the Blind, *In Gen.* XVI, 1–2 (*Sur la Genèse*, eds., P. Nautin and L. Doutreleau, SC 244 [Paris, 1978], 200–1).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Rom. 4:11; Eusebios, *Praep. Evang.* VII, 8, 22–25 (*Eusebios, Preparation for the Gospel*, I trans. E. Gifford [Eugene, 2002], 334).

¹⁰⁵ G 1397 (Petit, *La chaîne*, III, 309).

¹⁰⁶ *GenR* 63, 6 (*Genesis Rabbah*, II, 353).

¹⁰⁷ *GenR* 60, 14: 63,8 8 (*Genesis Rabbah*, II, 327 and 353, respectively).

¹⁰⁸ Malachi 1: 2–3 cited in Rom. 9:9–13. On this topic see also the comprehensive study of I. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Jews and Christians—Collateral Images* (Tel-Aviv, 2000) (Hebrew).

¹⁰⁹ Origen, *Num. Hom.* III, 2, 2 (*Origène, Homélie sur les Nombres*, 78–81).

Eustathios of Antioch (d. before 337 [?]), whose exegesis has survived in a fragmentary chain, sees in the election of Jacob and the rejection of Esau the separation of Christians from Jews.¹¹⁰ The two brothers, according to Eusebios of Emesa (ca. 300–359), are “two nations and two peoples. One is the slave of the one with good sense. Jacob is instructed by the Holy Spirit. He became the ‘cornerstone’ [Christ].”¹¹¹ Cyril of Alexandria insists several times on the status inversion between the senior and the junior, i.e., the Synagogue and the young Church.¹¹²

In practice, artists represented the twin birth according to the “realistic” scheme: Esau is hairy and Jacob, issuing from his mother’s womb, stretches out his left hand toward his brother’s heel (Fig. 9, color).¹¹³ The hair on Esau’s body represents the rejection of the discarded people (Esau = Israel), and the seizing of the heel indicates the predominance of the Chosen People (Jacob = the Christians) over those who have lost grace, as Eusebios of Caesarea emphasizes in a fragmentary chain.¹¹⁴

Phares-Zara is the other pair representing the theme of the younger one’s primacy. Their conception and birth (Gen. 38:26) are depicted in two scenes of the Octateuchs. The first shows Judah handing the pledges to a chastely clothed Tamar, belying the biblical text in which she pretends to be a harlot. The birth itself is represented according to the “realistic” scheme (Fig. 10, color).¹¹⁵

Following the midrashic tradition in which Tamar’s act is perceived favorably,¹¹⁶ the “signet” and the “bracelets” indicating the royal function of her descent and the staff referring to the royal Messiah,¹¹⁷ the

¹¹⁰ Devresse, *Les anciens commentateurs*, 55.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹¹² G 1386 (Petit, *La chaîne*, III, 300). On this, see also Procopios (G 1391[*ibid.*, 304–5]).

¹¹³ Vat. 747, fol. 46v (Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 94, fig. 355). See also the illustrations in Ser., fol. 95v; Sm., fol. 38r; Vat. 746, fol. 89v (*ibid.*, figs. 356–8).

¹¹⁴ G 1398 (Petit, *La chaîne*, III, 309).

¹¹⁵ Vat. 747, fol. 59v (Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 120, fig. 479). For additional illustrations of the scene, see Ser., fol. 126r; Sm., fol. 51v; Vat. 746, fol. 119v (*ibid.*, 119–20, figs. 480–2). A later hand added the pledges in Ser. and Vat. 746 (*ibid.*, 119).

¹¹⁶ I Chron. 2:3–15; Ruth 4:18–22.

¹¹⁷ *GenR* 85, 9 (*Genesis Rabbah*, II, 212–13). See more on the favorable rabbinic attitude in the discussion of M. Petit, “Exploitations non bibliques des thèmes de Tamar et de Genèse 38. Philon d’Alexandrie; textes et traditions juives jusqu’aux Talmudim,” in *ALEXANDRINA: Hellénisme, judaïsme et christianisme à Alexandrie. Mélanges offerts au P. Claude Mondésert* (Paris, 1987), 76–115.

church fathers also legitimized her behavior. Origen maintains that the act was intended to impregnate Tamar, thus drawing a parallel to the mystery of Christ (Judah), who gave the Church innumerable doctrines.¹¹⁸ Eusebios of Caesarea, too, sanctioned the woman's adulterous act since it was motivated by the need to attain posterity and her wish to be among the friends of God, even though she was a stranger. God, recompensing her virtue, gave her twins.¹¹⁹ Even more cogent is Ephrem the Syrian's exegesis, which not only imbues the adulterous act with sacrality, but also sanctified its messianic message.¹²⁰ He maintains that since Tamar saw Judah as the ancestor of Christ, she "stole" his seed in order to save humanity and generate the Christological genealogy.¹²¹ Ephrem's writings evidently refer to Matt. 1:3, where Tamar vouches for the authenticity of Christ's Davidic line: "And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar." In effect, it is Judah's pledge—the staff—a royal symbol mentioned in Jewish literature, which heralds the coming of Christ from the line of Phares.¹²²

The Eastern exegetes also dealt with the brothers' rivalry, namely, the younger brother supplanting the elder one. Eusebios of Caesarea found the answer to the dual reference in the symbolism of the scarlet thread; the twins are the two types of alliances: Phares is the figure of the New Alliance and the Church,¹²³ whereas Zara represents the Jewish people living under the Law.¹²⁴ For Origen, the scarlet thread signifies "the sacred blood which spurts forth from his side [Christ's] by the wound of the lance,"¹²⁵ a metaphor found later in Cyril of Alexandria.¹²⁶

¹¹⁸ Origen, *Ct. Hom.* II, 7, 16 (*Origen: The Song of Songs*, 147–8).

¹¹⁹ Eusebios, *Quaest. evang. ad Steph.* VII (PG 22:909–10).

¹²⁰ On the contribution of rabbinic sources in Ephrem's exegesis, see T. Kronholm, "Holy Adultery: The Interpretation of the Story of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 38) in the Genuine Hymns of Ephraem Syrus (ca. 306–373)," *Orientalia Suecana* 40 (1991): 149–65, esp. 150.

¹²¹ *Ephrem, Virg. XXII*, 19–20 (*Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Virginitate*, ed., E. Beck, CSCO 223 [Louvain, 1962], 70).

¹²² Justin, *Dial. cum Trypho* LXXXVI, 6 (*Justin Martyr*, 184).

¹²³ A fragmentary chain attributed to Origen makes Tamar the figure of the Church (*G* 1838 [Petit, *La chaîne*, IV, 202]).

¹²⁴ Eusebios, *Quaest. evang. ad Steph.* VII, 5–6 (PG 22:908–9). Ambrose pursues Eusebios's argument, and develops the exegetical meaning of the twins' birth (which is to be understood as a mystery) as prematurely referring to the lives of two peoples (*Expositio Evang. Secundum Lucam* III, 17–29 [*L'Évangile de saint Luc*, 128–36]; *Apol. David* 11 [*Ambrose, Apologie*, 86–9]).

¹²⁵ Origen, *Hom. Lev.*, VIII, 10 (trans. from Origène, *Homélie sur Lévitique*, ed., M. Borret, SC 287 [Paris, 1981], 48–51).

¹²⁶ *G* 1843 (Petit, *La chaîne*, IV, 204).

The birth of Phares may be explained by the "breach of the closure," where a "new people" will wear out the closure of the Law. Thus, the two figures embody the eternal value of the Christological message, representing the true Law, the prefiguration of Christ's coming, and the establishment of His Church.¹²⁷

The Christian texts throw light on the artistic choice of the "realistic" childbearing scheme in the case of Tamar's twins. The image emphasizes the double birth and, through it, the testimony of Christ's ancestors. In this context it should be observed that this scene is preceded in the same miniature by the scene of Tamar showing Judah the pledges. The "concrete" facts represented by the pledges, together with the birth, testify to the "veracity" of this birth, thus confirming Christ's genealogy.

The reading of the Christian texts mentioning the above fraternal pairs, who represent first and foremost the binomial Law-Faith or Jews-Christians, elucidates the choice of the "realistic" iconographical birth formula. These are two opposed communities, in which the young Church is given primacy over its senior, the Synagogue. The Eastern fathers therefore linked the theme of the firstborn being replaced by his cadet with the notion of the younger Christian assuming dominion over the older Jew. In fact, the exegetical approach reverses *de facto* not only the situation where the younger supplants the older, but also their roles. Isaac, *Verus Israel*, becomes the father of Christianity and the Jewish people become *Vetus Israel*.¹²⁸ It should be noted, however, that apart from the images of Isaac and Ishmael, and Phares and Zara, nowhere in the illuminations are there pictorial clues to this theological juxtaposition.¹²⁹

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In concluding our investigation of the typological contribution of female biblical images conveying Christian truths, it is important, above all, to point out that the essential elements in the analysis of

¹²⁷ M. Petit, "Figures de l'Ancien Testament: Tamar," *Cahiers de Biblia Patristica* 2 (1989): 143-57.

¹²⁸ M. Simon, *Verus Israël, Étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l'Empire romain, 135-425* (Paris, 1948).

¹²⁹ The existence of theological polemics against Judaism, absent however from visual art, was observed by E. Revel-Neher, *The Image of the Jew in Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 1992), 111-3.

the material demanded a comprehensive reading of illuminated manuscripts from the middle Byzantine era, the typological interpretation of the Bible, the input of midrashic literature, religious currents and, to a lesser degree, Byzantine imperial doctrines. Although this seemed somewhat daunting at the beginning, the relatively homogeneous character of the manuscripts greatly facilitated the task, permitting us to draw some general conclusions. However, given the fact that the manuscripts were most probably intended for a small and limited male audience, it is necessary to consider carefully the implications that may be drawn from this analysis.

More often than not, the images function as visual commentaries rather than illustrations. Many of the deviations from the biblical text and pictorial traditions result from the typological and allegorical guidelines dictated by Byzantine thinking, and from the Christian notion of the people of the Bible. The analysis indeed confirms the centrality of the exegetical background of biblical iconography.

The images do not offer a unilateral and limited vision, but a diversified picture of Byzantine culture in a period when art, notably illuminated manuscripts, were of great importance. The apparent attempt of the artists to convey precise biblical-theological concepts held dear to the Byzantines, specifically those regarding its female figures, led to a nuanced art that interpreted these images as exhibiting varying degrees of post-iconoclastic Orthodox notions.

A. *On Virginity and Motherhood*

The key to understanding the illuminations discussed here lies in the typological approach, and in the intimate relationship between images and texts. The figures of Sarah and Bathsheba are silent yet forceful recipients of the divine announcement of their conception. The figure of Eve, and the artist's concern to desexualize her body (what I call the "quasi-ascetic" appearance) by eliminating any such suggestive traits, may be grouped with the first two. Moreover, the prophetic style of the narrative alludes not to the physical process of conception, but to its spiritual dimension. This approach is reinforced by rendering the key typological figures in Byzantine theological thought—Isaac and Solomon—through "Christianized" birthing, which emulates the Nativity and thereby endorses, through Marian parallels, the abstract idea of Christ's humanity and the promise of redemption. The new images, devised most probably in the aftermath of Iconoclasm to meet

the needs of a society striving to emphasize spirituality, enhance the biblical teaching of Christ's Incarnation and offer a visualization using the typological-Christological approach.

Firmly anchored in patristic exegesis, these scenes reflect the battle waged over images in the troubled post-iconoclastic period of the eighth and ninth centuries, and reflect theological changes in Byzantine society. The Old Testament figures were meant to shed light on the miraculous character of the Incarnation, and possibly also to provide an argument against the iconoclasts.¹³⁰

One of the most powerful iconodule advocates that gave exceptional impetus to the cult of the Virgin with the demise of Iconoclasm was the patriarch Photios.¹³¹ In this regard, his Sermon XVII, "On the Inauguration of the Image of the Virgin," in which Mary's virginity and motherhood are closely related is enlightening: "A Virgin with a Child reclining in her arms for our salvation is a Christian mystery. She is both mother and virgin at the same time, but no shame to either condition. Through art we see a lifelike imitation of her."¹³²

Ioli Kalavrezou has shown that the growing cult of the Virgin appears to be the reason for replacing the term *theotokos*, used until the end of the seventh century, with *meter theou*, which appeared after the dispute over the images.¹³³ Emphasis on the Virgin's motherhood is attested in many contemporary works of art representing Christ from the Incarnation and until the Crucifixion, thus reinforcing the notion regarding His human nature.¹³⁴ Visual expressions of the special devotion to the Virgin increased considerably in all strata of society at this time.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ This well-known argument of the iconodules, used in their polemics with the iconoclasts, has been accepted since the Council of 787; A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin. Le dossier archéologique* (Paris, 1998²), 191, note 52.

¹³¹ R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons* (London, 1985), 143–58.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 149.

¹³³ I. Kalavrezou, "Images of the Mother: When the Virgin Mary Became *Meter Theou*," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44 (1990): 168–70.

¹³⁴ Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 247–8, 302–3; C. Walter, "Christological Themes in the Byzantine Marginal Psalters from the Ninth to the Eleventh Centuries," *Revue des études byzantines* 44 (1986): 269–87; Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 281–307, 404–6.

¹³⁵ Cormack, *Writing in Gold*, 165–76. See also *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (exhibition catalogue, Benaki Museum, Athens), ed.,

The influence of early Jewish literary sources on these scenes is relatively limited, thus corroborating the accepted notion of their lesser weight in middle Byzantine manuscripts.¹³⁶ As in the case of the sporadic, non-systematic transmission of midrashic elements to early Christian art,¹³⁷ there is no cogent answer in the current state of the Jewish iconographic material to assess the precise way in which they came to influence post-iconoclastic images. They most probably made some inroads into Byzantine iconography through the exegesis of the Eastern fathers.¹³⁸

B. *Anti-Jewish Polemics*

The idea of Christian superiority over Judaism, as expressed in birthing images, may seem somewhat anachronistic in light of the Jews' social status in the middle Byzantine period. Although considered second-class citizens, they were nevertheless citizens of the empire. Sporadically forced to convert (for example, during the reign of Basil I; 867–886),¹³⁹ they were tolerated and integrated fully into the Byzantine social fabric. In fact, they enjoyed a legal status and benefitted from its protection.¹⁴⁰ Jews were allowed to frequent existing synagogues and to practice their liturgy freely; although the building of new synagogues was forbidden, the prohibition was not always enforced.¹⁴¹ Moreover,

M. Vassilaki (Athens, 2000); *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed., idem (Ashgate, 2005).

¹³⁶ Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 321–2.

¹³⁷ K. Kogman-Appel, "Bible Illustration and the Jewish Tradition," in Williams, *Imaging the Bible*, 61–96, esp. 95–6.

¹³⁸ However, indirect Jewish textual imprints can be found in specific cases, as, for instance, in the illustration of Rahab's story (Judges 2–3) in contemporary illuminated manuscripts (M. Meyer, "Harlot or Penitent? The Image of Rahab in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts," *Ars Judaica* 2 [2006]: 25–34).

¹³⁹ *Homilies of Photios*, 151–52.

¹⁴⁰ It should be mentioned that during the fifth and sixth centuries, the Jewish community was legally recognized and its religious cult officially protected (A. Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium," in idem, *Jews and Other Minorities in Byzantium* [Ramat Gan, 1995], 56).

¹⁴¹ This state of affairs corresponds to earlier imperial policy toward the Jews in Byzantium. In 632, Heraclius ordered all Byzantine Jews to convert; they were persecuted under Leo III when a similar decree concerning the Jews was issued by this emperor in 721/2. In both instances, the enforcement of the imperial decrees was only sporadic and very limited. Basil I, following the example of Leo and Heraclius, attempted, probably in 874, to convert the Jews by force, with the same limited results as his predecessors. A few Jews converted, but they returned to Judaism as quickly as they could. Emperor Leo VI annulled his father's decree (Sharf, "Jews in Byzantium,"

there is evidence that their social involvement with gentiles was appreciable and they did not suffer from any restrictions on employment or any other economic activity.¹⁴²

The discrepancy between the relatively tolerant Byzantine attitude toward the Jews and the persistence of polemical theological texts accompanying the biblical images may be resolved not only by the fact that exegetical chains compiled before the sixth century continued to accompany illuminations in the ninth to thirteenth centuries,¹⁴³ but also in what Guy Stroumsa characterizes as “anti-Judaism as a Christian discourse of self-definition” (in contrast to the social dimension reflecting conflicts between Jews and Christians).¹⁴⁴ He observes that the background of the Christian-Jewish polemics in early Christianity was meant, *inter alia*, to strengthen the faith or the self-confidence of those already converted, rendering the *Contra Iudaeos* literature a tool for building and affirming group-identity in early Christianity.¹⁴⁵

Greek anti-Jewish polemical treatises abounding in the pre- and post-iconoclastic periods continued to serve the Byzantines in the internal discussion of their faith; some of the writings bear a missionary character.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, even before Iconoclasm,¹⁴⁷ and more pronouncedly after its demise, anti-Jewish polemics were often exacerbated by the anti-iconoclastic discourse, in which the anti-Jewish rhetoric sometimes obscured the anti-iconoclastic notions. An enlightening example

56–66, 68). On the attitude of the Macedonian emperors toward the Jews, see also *idem*, “The Vision of Daniel as a Byzantine-Jewish Historical Sources,” in *Jews and Other Minorities*, 119–35, esp. 132–3.

¹⁴² The Jews were only prohibited from making transactions on lands owned by the Church, and they could testify before a court only in matters regarding Jews (Sharf, “Jews in Byzantium,” 58, 66–71).

¹⁴³ See above, 974 and note 28.

¹⁴⁴ G. Stroumsa, “From Anti-Judaism to Antisemitism in Early Christianity?” in *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews*, eds., O. Limor and G. Stroumsa (Tübingen, 1996), 3. More specifically, on the role the Jews played in the turbulent seventh and early eighth centuries, and on anti-Jewish polemics, see A. Cameron, “Byzantines and Jews: Some Recent Work on Early Byzantium,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 249–74, with expanded bibliography.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁴⁶ S. Krauss, *The Jewish-Christian Controversy from the Earliest Times to 1789*, I: *History* (Tübingen, 1995), 61–6.

¹⁴⁷ The association between Jews and iconoclasts is articulated, for example, in the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, where the iconoclasts are described as “godless Jews and enemies of truth” (Cameron, “Byzantines and Jews,” 269, note 80).

can be found in Photios's above-mentioned Sermon XVII, which was delivered by the Patriarch before two emperors, the court, clergy, and congregation of the Hagia Sophia cathedral:

Look at the beauty and brightness [i.e. the icon of the Virgin] of which the church had been deprived. That was the action of an insolent Jewish hand, an act of hatred. . . . The destruction of icons comes from uncontrolled and foul hatred. Those people stripped the church, the Bride of Christ, of her ornaments, and wounded and scarred her, and wanted to leave her naked, unsightly and wounded—imitating Jewish madness.¹⁴⁸

It is not surprising, then, that images associating Jews and iconoclasts occur concurrently in contemporary illuminated Psalters; through caricatural and grotesque facial features, both groups become intermittently assimilated and virulently attacked.¹⁴⁹

Concluding the theme of the binomial firstborn-cadet (rejected-chosen), which is closely linked to the idea of Christian superiority over Judaism, we can reasonably assume that it was used to affirm post-iconoclast orthodox self-definition in the face of groups such as iconoclasts or Jews who refused to adhere to iconodule/Christian ideals.

C. Patronage and Audience

A confusing factor in the picture we are trying to reconstruct is not only the spotty character of the extant and comparative visual material, but also the problem regarding how the audience and the biblical figures are connected. Although the Byzantines attached importance to literacy and culture,¹⁵⁰ and elementary education was by and large probably available, literacy was not widespread.¹⁵¹ The group that pro-

¹⁴⁸ Trans. by Cormack, *Writing in Gold*, 149–50.

¹⁴⁹ Corrigan, *Visual Polemics*, 59–61; idem, "The Jewish 'Satyr' in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters," in *Hellenistic and Jewish Arts, Interaction, Tradition and Renewal*, ed., A. Ovadia (Tel Aviv, 1998), 351–68; Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 262–79, where the author links the anti-Jewish miniatures in Paris gr. 510 to contemporary missionary and conversion campaigns.

¹⁵⁰ N. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London, 1973).

¹⁵¹ On Byzantine literacy, see R. Browning, "Literacy in the Byzantine World," *BMGS* 4 (1978): 39–54; M. Mullett, "Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries: Papers of the 16th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Edinburgh, March 1982*, ed., M. Angold, B.A.R. International Series 221 (Oxford, 1984), 173–201; ideam, "Writing in Early Mediaeval Byzantium," in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed., R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), 156–85. See also D. Reinsch, "Women's Literature

fessed an active interest in literature was even smaller.¹⁵² The Bible was known to everyone, yet few would page through an illustrated manuscript. Moreover, the production of an illuminated book required a large sum of money,¹⁵³ so we must assume that the owners of the illuminated manuscripts, who were literate and had the means to commission such books, were confined to a small, well-versed upper class. The books were probably produced in Constantinople by imperial or monastic command, implying the homogeneous character of the audience, which hailed from the same cultural milieu and shared the same interests.

What exactly were these interests, and to what extent were the patrons of the books involved in their contents? Let us first address the second question. Only in a few instances was there a close link between the illustrations and their readership. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the richness of the images and their polyvalent meaning is to be accredited to someone affiliated with the Church. The same profound knowledge of Christian exegesis that was translated into images applies to the Octateuchs, which were all produced in the dynamic cultural climate of the imperial court in the middle Byzantine era. As a matter of fact, the Seraglio manuscript was commissioned by Isaac Porphyrogenetos (ca. 1007–1060/61), son of Alexios I Komnenos and apparently a member of the imperial family.¹⁵⁴ Other manuscripts yield much less information about the patron's identity. It is even more difficult to assess the nature of the patron's intervention in the contents of the manuscript; he was not always the source of ideas, much less of the details of a work.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, we probably have to attribute the invention of images to the scribes and artists rather than to the patrons of the manuscripts.

Whatever the forces behind the illustrations may have been, there is no doubt that their involvement reflected not only the biblical narrative, but also the powerful pictorial expressions of fundamental

in Byzantium?—The Case of Anna Komnene," in *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, ed., T. Gouma-Peterson (New York, 2000), 83–105.

¹⁵² R. Cormack, "Aristocratic Patronage of the Arts in 11th- and 12th-Century Byzantium," in *Byzantine Aristocracy*, 158–72 (repr. idem, *The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage* [London, 1989]); idem, *Writing in Gold*, 179–214.

¹⁵³ N. Wilson, "Books and Readers in Byzantium," in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen*, 1–15, esp. 1–4.

¹⁵⁴ Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Octateuch*, 334–7.

¹⁵⁵ Cormack, "Aristocratic Patronage," 166–8.

notions meant to enlarge and enrich the audience's understanding of the text. The female figures discussed above illustrate poignantly and evocatively paramount Christian truths: salvation and the mystery of the Incarnation intermingle with Mary's virginity and the emphasis on her motherhood. The overall purpose of new images, drawing on older pictorial traditions, is clear—to make Christian dogmas palpable and to challenge those whose views were not in agreement with Orthodoxy. Indeed, the female images are most frequently expressions of then popular theological and spiritual ideals, rarely giving way to glimpses of reality.¹⁵⁶ The illustrations, resembling other domains of Byzantine art,¹⁵⁷ allow the patrons of these works to articulate their private devotion and translate the salutary promise into visual terms.

One can argue along more general lines that the prismic nature of the biblical female was used prudently. Whoever the patrons, donors, or recipients of the manuscripts were, the images had a triple scope. Not only were they intended to disseminate Christian dogmas, but the specific selection of these figures corresponded in many ways to the post-iconoclastic struggle that Orthodox believers continued to wage in order to affirm their identity, and the illuminated word, drawing image and beholder into a close union, presents the female figure as a source of reflection on the place of humankind in the universe and its Christian salvation.

¹⁵⁶ This aspect is largely discussed in my book, *An Obscure Portrait: Imaging the Everyday Life of Byzantine Women* (London, 2009), esp. 298–309.

¹⁵⁷ See, e.g., A. Cutler, "Art in Byzantine Society: Motive Forces of Byzantine Patronage," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 31/2 (1981): 759–87.

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